This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

572.4
Blunt
v.1
c.2

42195

Harvard College Library

FROM

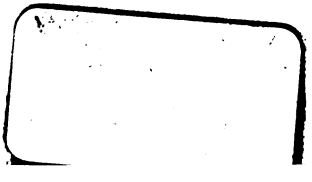
.....

.....

.....

Deposited in
ANDOVER-HARVARD LIBRARY

~~0 959~~



572.4
Blunt
v.1
c.2

42195

Harvard College Library

FROM

.....

.....

.....

Deposited in
ANDOVER-HARVARD LIBRARY

~~0 959~~

LEICESTER:
Printed by Combe and Crossley.

TWELVE LECTURES

UPON THE

HISTORY OF ST. PAUL,

DELIVERED

DURING LENT, 1832, AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, UPPER CHELSEA.

PART II.

BY THE

REV. HENRY BLUNT, A.M.

RECTOR OF STREATHAM, SURREY;

LATE FELLOW OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE; AND CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF RICHMOND.

EIGHTH EDITION.

LONDON:

J. HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY;

HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO. PATERNOSTER ROW.

1841.

MAY 5 1933

W. S. Appleton

PREFACE.

THE Author, in committing the second part of the History of St. Paul to the press, would earnestly repeat the prayer with which he accompanied the first part, that the life-giving influences of the Divine Spirit might rest upon his feeble endeavours. He would only further express a hope that in these times of delusion and unsoundness, there may be nothing in the following pages at variance with "the faith once delivered to the saints," as revealed to us in the

word of God, or as set forth in the admirable Articles, Offices, and Liturgy of that Church to which it is the Author's highest earthly privilege to belong.

Upper Chelsea,
January, 1833.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

ACTS xix. 20.

"So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

St. Paul at Ephesus—Modern miracles—The seven sons of Sceva—The magicians burn their books,.. *Page* 1

LECTURE II.

ACTS xx. 24.

"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

St. Paul at Troas—Eutychus—St. Paul's address to the elders of the Ephesian church—"None of these things move me,".. 18

LECTURE III.

ACTS xx. 36, 37, 38.

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all; and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more."

St. Paul's address to the elders of the Ephesian church concluded—On parting with Christian friends,.. 43

LECTURE IV.

ACTS xxi. 13.

"I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

St. Paul at Tyre—At the house of Philip the evangelist, at Cesarea—Interview with Agabus—Dangers of the sun-shine hours of life—"The will of the Lord be done," 67

LECTURE V.

ACTS xxi. 26.

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the

accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them."

St. Paul at Jerusalem—Countenances by his example an adherence to the ceremonial law—On the concessions made, by religious people, to the world,.... 91

LECTURE VI.

ACTS xxiii. 11.

"*And the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.*"

St. Paul a prisoner in the hands of the Romans—The Jews' unholy jealousy of the Gentiles—St. Paul sentenced to be scourged—Claims the privilege of a Roman citizen—Carried before the Sanhedrim—The Lord Jesus Christ appears to St. Paul in a vision—The Lord's presence with His people to the end of time, ... 212

LECTURE VII.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

"*And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.*"

St. Paul before Felix—His reply to the charge of Tertullus—St. Paul before Felix and Drusilla—"Reasons of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come"—The sinner's procrastination,..... 147

LECTURE VIII.

ACTS xxvi. 28.

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Felix leaves St. Paul prisoner at Cesarea—St. Paul before Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice—Festus pronounces St. Paul to be beside himself—Agrippa almost persuaded to be a Christian—"Almost Christians" 177

LECTURE IX.

ACTS xxvii. 31.

"Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

St. Paul's appeal to Cesar—The voyage to Rome—Storm—The angel of the Lord sent to St. Paul—"Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved,".. 204

LECTURE X.

ACTS xxviii. 30, 31.

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

St. Paul's shipwreck and deliverance—Value of human opinions—Comfort of human sympathy—Journey to Rome—Martyrdom, ... 227

LECTURE XI.

ROMANS vii. 19.

"For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."

The nature of St. Paul's experience,. 253

LECTURE XII

GALATIANS vi. 14.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The subject of St. Paul's boast,..... 277

LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

Acts xix. 20.

SO MIGHTILY GREW THE WORD OF GOD, AND PREVAILED.

In recommencing these lectures, I could wish to remind my hearers that they are intended to be very plain and simple and practical commentaries upon the divine word. Nothing critical, nothing learned, nothing argumentative, will be admitted into them. They will be, as far as I am enabled to render them, faithful expositions and practical appli-

cations of the leading events in the life of him of whom they speak, and will derive their chief interest and value, if they have any, from the fact that many of these events will, perhaps, touch responsive chords in our own lives and conversations, and vibrate, it may be, mournfully, but, I trust, usefully, to our affections and hearts.

Upon the last recurrence of this holy season, you were invited to the consideration of the life and doctrines of St. Paul. After having traced this great apostle of the Gentiles through many scenes of labour and of peril, we left him at Ephesus, where, as we are informed in the chapter from which the text is taken, he abode two years, preaching "the word of the Lord Jesus," and "working special miracles."

It was thus that it pleased God to confirm the teaching of these holy men of old, that if their hearers believed not them, they might believe the works;

while in the present instance an express prediction of our Lord was remarkably verified, viz. "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father." We are, accordingly, told in the 12th verse of the chapter from which the text is taken, that from the body of St. Paul "were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirit went out of them." The object of bestowing upon the children of men such extraordinary power was, no doubt, to convince the enemy and the blasphemer, that the truths which were preached to them were an immediate message from God Himself. We, therefore, find few instances in scripture of miracles, unless for the purpose of establishing some new doctrine, or confirming the authority of some messenger of the Most High. I need scarcely say that one among the many proofs that the so-called miracles *of the present day* are not, as they profess

to be, extraordinary interpositions of divine power, may be deduced from the truth to which I have just alluded; they are neither wrought to establish any new revelation from the Almighty, nor to accredit the mission of any new messenger from above; there is, therefore, no analogy between them and the miracles of the Bible; and this being the case, it will, I trust, argue neither want of candour, nor of charity, to say that we must wait for much stronger evidence than any which has yet been adduced, before we can acknowledge them to be divine interpositions; and must, after the most careful and solemn investigation which we have been able to bestow, attribute the instances of which so much has been lately written and spoken, rather to the powerful effects of religious excitement upon warm and ardent temperaments, than to any deviation from those laws, which nature has received from nature's God.

The effect upon the inhabitants of Ephesus of the very remarkable instances of divine interposition of which we have been speaking, is thus described: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who did so; and the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man, in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house, naked and wounded."

Thus in this, as in most other cases, the true and genuine coin was followed by the worthless and contemptible counterfeit. "The vagabond Jews," willing to make a merchandize of that which the apostles freely bestowed, presumed to use "the name of Christ," without par-

ticipating, or desiring to participate, in His Spirit; hoping, from what they had seen, that that name of power could not be used without producing effects which might readily be diverted to their own temporal interests.

It is not too much to say, that the preaching of Christ in these our days has been followed by results by no means dissimilar. There are still those, we fear, who venture to imitate these exorcists of old, and to preach an unfelt and an unappreciated gospel; to "call over" their hearers "the name of Christ," while their own hearts have never been truly convinced by His Spirit, or subject to His power. Like "the seven sons of Sceva," who were almost destroyed by the man they professed to heal, these false teachers will, in the end, receive the due reward of their deeds, in the contempt of those whom they deceive, and still more fatally in the wrath of Him with whose great name they have presumed to trifle. For

has not our Lord Himself declared, that at the last great day, when all mankind shall be ranged in two vast companies, preparing for a blessed or a miserable eternity, there shall be those who shall say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? then shall He answer and say unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Nor is it only in the case of ministers that dangers such as these exist. You, my brethren, are not yourselves beyond their influence. You may, in a day of much religious profession, like the present, learn to name the name of Christ, to follow in the train of His people, to attend religious meetings, to take prominent parts in religious societies, and yet be at last as void of all interest in Christ, and all share in His blessedness, as the seven sons of Sceva! The heart, and the heart alone, is the index to the Christian. "Where your treasure is, there will your

heart be also." Pray that "the pearl of great price" may be your treasure; that you may not content yourself with the name of Christ, but with your whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, seek His love, which is better than life, His approving smile, which will one day be better to you than ten thousand worlds. Live to Him here, that you may live with Him throughout a glorious eternity.

In the instance before us, the effect of our blessed Lord vindicating, as we have seen, his insulted authority, was very remarkably evinced, for the evangelist adds, "This was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus, and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

What a triumph was this for the infant gospel! How did it thus, even in its cradle, strangle some of the most noxious serpents of heathen superstition! These magicians, it appears, were men of high repute in their generation; they had attracted the homage of the multitude by their juggling devices, and had expended immense sums upon the books which contained the rudiments of their art; and yet, no sooner did the grace of God really influence them, the power and the love of Christ take full possession of them, than they resolved to sacrifice every thing for which they had hitherto lived, to part with fame, property, character, each of them most dear to the natural mind; and to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" their Lord.

It will be profitable to observe for a moment the process which took place in the minds of these persons, and brought them to so remarkable a result. We are

told that they first "believed," they then "confessed and shewed their deeds," and they lastly "brought their books together, and burned them before all men."

The religion of our adorable Redeemer is the same, brethren, in all ages; as there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," so there is invariably produced, by the true acknowledgment of this one Lord, the heartfelt reception of this one faith, the participation of this one baptism of the Holy Ghost, the same blessed effect. That effect is precisely such as the evangelist has here recorded. When you are led to a true and living faith in the Son of God, or in other words, when you *believe*, you are induced to confess before God, with penitential sorrow, your deeds, you learn to look back upon much of your past life with deep heartfelt regret, deploring from your inmost soul many of those things, which in your days of darkness, cost you neither repugnance nor sorrow. But even this confession,

sincere and heartfelt though it be, the genuine fruit of a living faith, as it would not satisfy your God, so neither does it content your own awakened heart. Like these magicians, you cannot rest till you have not merely confessed and deplored, but *put away* from you the accursed thing, till you have relinquished every unholy profit, and given up every unlawful or questionable enjoyment.

This may fairly be assumed, then, as a test by which to determine the strength with which the gospel of Christ has been brought to bear upon yourselves. Has it ever influenced you thus? Has it operated thus powerfully to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin, even though the sacrifice be costly and self-denying? Has every thing displeasing to God been relinquished—every thing contrary to His will and His commands been given up? Or, if this be saying too much, Have you at least good reason to hope that there is no profit, and no plea-

sure, and no pursuit, which you are not anxious to sacrifice to the will and the honour of your God? Happy are they whose religion abounds in such unquestionable fruits as these! they proclaim at once the tree of the Lord's planting, whose leaf shall not wither, whose root is imbedded deep in the Rock of ages, and whose head has risen above the mists and damps of this world of sin, and is bearing much fruit in the perpetual sunshine which lies beyond them.

The reflection of the apostle upon recording the self-denying act of the magicians of which we have spoken, is the following: "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." Yes! there is no proof so striking, there is no evidence so satisfactory of the mighty power and progress of God's word, in a city, in a congregation, in a human heart, as when it leads to unshrinking obedience to the plain and positive commands of God. If these magicians had been only

half convinced, and half converted, they would have been content to have sold their books, or to have laid them by in some secret chamber, with perhaps a lingering feeling that at some future time they might recur to them without danger; but this will not content the true convert; he cannot rest satisfied until he has placed himself, as far as in him lies, beyond the temptation, or the possibility of a retreat. My brethren, if the word of God be growing mightily, and prevailing among you, similar instances will not merely occasionally occur, but abound. The man of pleasure will forego the sinful or unprofitable amusements in which he once delighted: the man of business, if he have been a dishonest man, will now confess his deeds to God, and, as far as he is enabled, make reparation to those whom he had defrauded; he will put away his false weights and his short measures; or if he have hitherto been upright and conscientious, but still

too much engrossed by these earthly duties, he will now tear himself from all undue regard for them, put them from henceforth in their proper place, and "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness:" the man of literary pursuits will, I do not say, burn his books, but he will watch carefully over the effects which his favorite studies produce upon his affections, his temper, and his mind; and if he finds, as I fear he sometimes will, that these things, innocent in themselves, are by their engrossing and fascinating power, injurious to the best interests of his soul, he will at once unhesitatingly and decidedly renounce them. When I say, "at once," I do not mean at the very outset of a religious course. No? this is too much to expect; but as soon as the word of God "*prevails*," as the apostle expresses it;—as soon as the sword of the Spirit has beaten down the thousand barricades which an indefatigable devil is ever throwing up around

the citadel of our corrupt hearts, to defend them against the approach of their rightful owner. I allude thus particularly to this last class of my hearers, because in commencing a religious life, they have often very peculiar difficulties to cope with. They are not in danger from the temptations which delude, and the sins which ruin, the profligate or the sensualist; their temptation is of a more refined, a less obvious, and therefore often of a far more dangerous nature. Amidst the cold and heart-petrifying studies of philosophy or science, the simple truths of the gospel too often become distasteful; amidst the fictitious sorrows of imaginary beings, the excitements of romance, or the charms of poetry, the joys and sorrows of religion lose their due value and preponderance.

Thus, even after the Spirit of God has really begun a good work in the heart, there are often many dangerous delays, many painful drawings-back, many pow-

erful temptations to forsake the newly-adopted creed, and the Saviour who proclaims it: and all these impediments may be traced to the species of mental indulgence to which I have alluded, sometimes to the bewildering mazes of metaphysics, but still more often to the intoxicating charms of poetry, or the highly-wrought or falsely-coloured fictions of romance. If I am now addressing any of you, to whom what I have just remarked is applicable, I would earnestly desire to prevail with you on this point. You are not giving the gospel of a crucified Saviour and a merciful God, a fair and reasonable hope of success; if you desire to be in earnest in the great work of salvation, you must treat it as if it were, what in truth it is, the one great object of life; you must renounce, as far as you can, consistently with the duties of life, every pursuit and every enjoyment which interferes with its effects upon your mind, or which loosens its

hold upon your heart, and give up yourself wholly and unreservedly to its blessed and sanctifying influences.

Then, and not till then, shall we be enabled to rejoice that the word of the Lord is growing mightily, and prevailing; then and not till then, shall we be enabled to "thank God and take courage," believing that you are an accepted servant of our God, and shall hereafter be "our joy and crown of rejoicing" in the eternal presence of the Lord of glory.

LECTURE II.

ACTS XX. 24.

NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME, NEITHER COUNT I MY LIFE DEAR UNTO MYSELF, SO THAT I MIGHT FINISH MY COURSE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

AT the close of the last lecture we left St. Paul at Ephesus, where two of the most important years of his valuable ministry were employed. It appears from the history that his departure thence was hastened by one of those popular tumults which so often disgraced the most polished cities of antiquity, and which have not entirely disappeared under the civilizing influences of Chris-

tianity itself. St. Paul, however, having been preserved by the providence of God, through the instrumentality of his friends, from all the dangers of the outrage which occurred in the Ephesian theatre, it is unnecessary for us to dwell upon it.

Having spent some months in the tour through Macedonia and Greece, he landed upon his return at Troas.

While there, an incident occurred, trifling indeed in itself, but valuable as marking the character of the apostle, and evincing the divine power with which he was endowed. On the Lord's day, which even thus early was obviously a day set apart for divine ordinances in the church of Christ, on the evening of this day, the last of St. Paul's residence among them, the Christians at Troas having united together in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, St. Paul preached unto them; there were yet no temples rescued from the power of the evil spirit, to whose

worship they had been for ages prostituted; and the infant church of the Redeemer, despised and rejected, like that Redeemer Himself, had not where to lay her head. On the present occasion, therefore, all the Christians in Troas were gathered together in a large upper chamber; in which, says the evangelist, "were many lights," probably to mark the boldness of these early believers, who although dwelling in the midst of foes, courted neither darkness nor concealment. Anxious, no doubt, to improve to the very utmost this last opportunity, St. Paul continued his discourse even until midnight; some, perhaps most of his hearers, delighted in these lengthened instructions, and would willingly have sat through many a livelong night, like Lydia, to "attend to the things which were spoken by Paul;" but all have neither the same interest in spiritual things, nor the same powers of attention, even when they are interested. On the present occasion we are told that "there

sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead." The apostle, full of kindness and sympathy, instead of feeling offended at the neglect of his preaching, thus too palpably evinced, immediately stopped his discourse, and without waiting till they should bring up the body of this unfortunate young man, hastened himself, and "went down and fell on him, and embracing him, said, Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him." Not one word of reproof, or even of expostulation; but while he wrought this surprising miracle, he accompanied it by such acts of affectionate kindness and tenderness, as should remove all feelings from the mind of the sufferer, except those of gratitude to God for so miraculous and merciful a deliverance.

The incident which we have just read

may, perhaps, be allowed to furnish a caution with regard to your family exercises of devotion. If these are so lengthened out as to produce weariness, they not only fail of their purpose, but they provoke those very persons to sin whom you desire to benefit. When, therefore, you assemble your households for these important duties, avoid long prayers, long expositions, or the reading long portions of scripture. After the labours of the day, more especially, your domestics cannot possibly benefit by these lengthened services, and we believe that from a want of a due regard to this fact, many are led to consider family prayers as a burden, instead of enjoying them as a solace and delight.

Perhaps there is not much need in the present times to apply this story literally to yourselves. Few in these days actually sleep under sermons. In the times of our forefathers, when the hour-glass was placed by the side of the preacher,

and reversed more than even once or twice during a single discourse, such things might occur; at present they are doubtless rare, and except in some solitary instance, to be found in every congregation, almost unknown. And yet while I say and believe this, I should be very reluctant to aver, that there was no Eutychus even here present this day. Are there none among you, my brethren, who without closing your eyes are still asleep, even while in God's house, to all purposes of religious instruction, or spiritual improvement,—your thoughts wandering through the infinite space of worldly follies and foolish imaginations, your hearts untouched by the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and your minds unedified even while under the preaching of His word. Your bodies, indeed, seated in God's house of prayer, but your thoughts and feelings all absent, busily employed in the service of another master? For such, if such there be amongst us even

at this moment, I would earnestly pray that the same Spirit by whose wisdom St. Paul spake, and by whose power he called back the departed life of Eutychus, might speak this day to their slumbering souls, and say, with a power and unction which man cannot imitate, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

St. Paul having left Troas the following morning, and sailing by Chios and Samos, names well known to the lovers of Grecian story, tarried at Trogyllium, and the next day came to Miletus. As Miletus was the nearest port to Ephesus, we might, perhaps, for a moment, feel surprised that St. Paul should thus be in the immediate neighbourhood of some of his dearest friends, without visiting them. The reason, however, is explained by the evangelist, who tells us in the 16th verse, "Paul had determined to sail by," or past, "Ephesus, because he would not spend

the time in Asia, for he hasted, if it were possible, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."

While thus about his Master's business, he was resolved not to spend the time even in the endearments of Christian society. He would not, therefore, trust himself among the hospitalities of his Ephesian friends, but "passed by Ephesus," without casting anchor, until he had reached Miletus. So strong, however, were the feelings of affection for his Christian brethren in the breast of the apostle, that he could not prevail upon himself to forsake that region altogether, without one parting interview with those among whom his ministrations had been so abundantly blessed.

He accordingly sent from Miletus "to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church," and when they were come to him, he addressed them in a speech replete with so much important Christian doctrine, and so many touches of

Christian feeling, that we cannot employ the remainder of this lecture more profitably than in a partial consideration of it.

"Ye know," said this great apostle, addressing himself to the elders of the Ephesian church, who, we may well imagine, gathered round him with no ordinary feelings of interest and delight, "Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears and temptations which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews." There is nothing more striking throughout the whole of St. Paul's writings and discourses, than the remarkable vein of tenderness which pervades them; if speaking, as in the present instance, of his labours among his friends, he is not ashamed to say, "I have been with you with many tears;" if writing, as he does to his beloved Philippian converts, of those who were even the "enemies of

the cross of Christ," he still says, "of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping."

How beautiful a feature in the character of such a man! So much tenderness united to so much energy; the very softness of a woman to the indomitable spirit of a hero. What a pattern to the Christian minister, that while in his own person he is "enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," he may in his conduct to others, imitate the Christ-like spirit of him who could say, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us;" that, while as the minister of God, he is inflicting, as he is too often called to do, like a wise physician, many a deep and painful wound, he may learn to feel, and even to weep, for those upon whom his

prayers and labours have been wasted, and to whom the blessed gospel of a loving Saviour, has only been the "savour of death unto death."

St. Paul continues, ye know "how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

As in the opening of this address, we have been enabled to trace something of the feelings with which St. Paul instructed, here we may learn something of the manner and of the matter of his instructions.

First, for the *manner* of it; he did not content himself with occasionally or partially ministering in the word and ordinances of his divine Master, but like that divine Master himself, he was "instant in season and out of season." He says, "Ye

know from the first day that I came into Asia;" he had not, then, lost a single day since he first came among them, a single hour of the precious talent of time which God had committed to him. "I have been with you at all seasons," in your times of sorrow as well as joy, in your days of mourning, as well as of social intercourse. "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." Would to God, brethren, that we could unite in this declaration of the apostle; but alas! here our own heart condemns us: many are the profitable truths, and reproofs, and consolations, which we have kept back, not indeed willingly, but of necessity, because our own minds have overlooked them, or our own hearts have not duly felt and appreciated them.

There was no such dereliction on the part of St. Paul, for he spake at all times as he was "moved by the Holy Ghost." He proceeds to remind them that he had not confined these truths to his public

ministrations, he taught them privately, and "from house to house," setting forth the truths of the divine word in their families, as well as in their congregations, and teaching them to tell of divine things, as Israel of old, "at their sitting down and rising up." It is one of the misfortunes which can never be sufficiently deplored, in the present state of our own Church establishment, that from the overgrown size of many of our parochial charges, and the multiplicity of the duties thus entailed upon the ministers, it is utterly impossible, even were they possessed of the perseverance of an apostle and the strength of an angel, adequately to imitate this example of St. Paul. To endeavour after it to the utmost of our power is no less our pleasure than our duty, for we are well convinced that the seed sown in our public services, does most essentially need the culture and superintendence of private and personal visitation. "There is a

charm in the week-day services of a parish minister," says Dr. Chalmers, "which has not been duly estimated, either by philanthropists or patriots. His official and recognised character, furnishes him with a ready passport to every habitation, and he will soon find that a visit to the house of a parishioner is the surest way of finding access to his heart. Even the hardiest and most hopeless in vice, cannot altogether withstand this influence, and at times in their own domestic history, there are opportunities, whether by sickness, or disaster, or death, which afford a weighty advantage to the Christian kindness that is brought to bear upon them. His week-day attentions and their sabbath attendance, go hand in hand." "It is thus that a house-going minister wins for himself a church-going people."

But, my brethren, there is a sense in which a house-going minister may be the very contrast of St. Paul; he may be

the agreeable companion, always ready to join your social parties, and partake of every frivolous amusement of the passing hour; or even the intellectual associate, ready to converse with you sensibly and rationally upon men and manners, and books and politics, and yet his domiciliary visits may form no part of the apostle's plan, and follow no portion of his example. A minister at a card-table, for instance, or a minister in a ball-room, may indeed be a "house-going minister," but it may be to counteract during the week all that has been done on the sabbath, and to destroy by the emptiness and frivolity of his personal character all the dignity of his high and holy office. For a minister to visit usefully, he must visit as a minister. He must go to you at all times as the accredited messenger of his divine Master, and with something of the feelings of that divine Master himself, when he said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with,

and how am I straitened till it be accomplished:" his feelings must be, I have a message to deliver, and how am I straitened till it be received, in the love and in the power of it, into the heart of every soul committed to my charge.

While such is the spirit in which he must visit you, this is the spirit in which you must receive him; you must not be ashamed to speak to him of his Master; you must desire to hear of the things belonging to your peace; you must consider that his time is too precious to be wasted in the ceremonials of life; and at the close of an evening spent in rational and Christian intercourse, it is well that a more direct act of ministerial duty be performed, and that, as St. Paul himself expresses it in his instructions to Timothy, all such intercourse "be sanctified by the word of God and by prayer."

This was evidently the manner in which St. Paul entered into society, or

he could not have thus solemnly called his friends and hearers to bear witness that he had "testified *from house to house*," "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

Secondly, we observe from this passage the *matter* of St. Paul's communications. "Repentance towards God." I would remind you that repentance here means, not merely sorrow for sin, but a change of life, a turning of the heart to God, in fact a real, soul-saving conversion. St. Paul preached this as a duty binding upon every human being to whom he spoke, for his own words are, "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." He preached it also as a blessed and gratuitous privilege, for he distinctly says, "Jesus hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel." Thus did he preach "repentance towards God." He also preached "faith in our Lord Jesus

Christ," as the only way to the Father, the only hope for the sinner, the only grace which by "putting on Christ," shall enable you to appear complete in Him, and to "bring forth fruit unto life eternal."

"And now, brethren," continues the apostle, after thus describing, with a brief and beautiful simplicity, the *manner* and the *matter* of his ministerial teaching, "Behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befal me there." Blessed arrangement of the divine dispensation! Had even a St. Paul known all things that should befal him, the labours and the stripes, the prisons and the perils, the "weariness and painfulness," the watchings and fastings, the "cold and nakedness," which at a later day he was enabled to look back upon with triumph, even his faith, strong and ardent though it was, might have sunk appalled before the unequal conflict.

Thanks be to God, brethren, that we "know not the things which shall befal" us during the year, the week, the day, which has commenced; that our heavenly Father has in mercy drawn a curtain, which mortal eye can never penetrate, between the feelings of the present hour, and the painful realities of the future. How many a scene of harmless pleasure would be marred, how many an hour of innocent enjoyment broken up, if each one present were cursed with a passing vision of all that should befal him! It is enough for the child of God to know that his 'strength shall be equal to his day," he knows not—for worlds he would not know—what that day may bring forth.

This blissful ignorance, although not removed, was permitted to be partially dispelled in the case of St. Paul; he was not left without a hint of the sorrows which awaited him, for he adds,

"Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."

Thus far, then, his eyes were supernaturally opened; how melancholy a prospect would this have revealed to the man who is living for time; how cheering to him who was living for eternity! The road before him was indeed dark, the cloud above it lowering, but the eye of faith could distinguish in the distance "the crown of glory," and many a radiant beam glanced from it to cheer the sufferer on his heaven-ward way. In every city he was certain to encounter "bonds and afflictions," but in every city he was equally sure to meet a Saviour and a friend; one who when he told the apostle, in the first hours of his conversion, what "great things he should *suffer* for His name's sake," also told him "certainly I will be with thee." One who never yet has called even the lowest

of His followers to bear His cross, without accompanying it with His crown; and never yet has presented the cup of sorrow to the weakest of His flock, without pouring into it the strong consolations of His love.

St. Paul, therefore, scruples not to speak of these things as a "light affliction;" for he immediately adds, "but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Most beautiful picture of the calm and unshrinking resolution of the Christian hero! If he might but faithfully conclude the ministry he had received, and successfully testify the gospel which he loved, every trial was overlooked, every difficulty forgotten.

"None of these things move me." Was the apostle, then, a man of so hard

a nature and so insensible a temperament, that like the stoics of old, upon him sufferings and sorrow had lost their power? Far, very far from it. We have seen, even in this discourse, that he could feel most acutely, nay even weep, for the dangers of the thoughtless and the condemnation of the guilty; and did he who felt for all mankind, possess no feeling for himself? Doubtless he did feel, and feel most deeply; doubtless he was, in this sense, "moved" by the prospect of these bonds and afflictions, but he was not so moved as to hesitate for a moment in his onward course, to shrink back a single footstep from the impending danger. He had within his breast a principle which no difficulty could daunt, no trials terrify,—that principle was a deep, a heartfelt, an all-engrossing love of his Redeemer.

In comparison of that Redeemer, his ministry, his gospel, his honor, his

glory, the world and its delights, life and its attractions, were as light and evanescent as the motes which dance upon the sun-beam: for that Redeemer, as the apostle himself declares, "he had suffered the loss of all things, and did count them but dung that he might win Christ:" and with that Redeemer he hoped to spend a glorious and a blessed eternity. We can, therefore, readily believe that "none of these things moved him;" his heart was calm amidst tumultuous motion, and while every wind which blew only drove him closer to the Rock of ages, every rising surge but lifted him the higher from the earth, and raised him the nearer, even upon the very waters of affliction themselves, to the heaven which awaited him.

My beloved brethren, you as well as he of whom we speak, have all a course to run; to some, probably a long and an arduous and a troublous one, many sorrows, many afflictions

abide you. To others, the sun may even now ride high in the heavens; and to not a few, the pale grey tints of evening may have set in. Do you, with this apostle, desire to "finish your course with joy?" Surely I need not make the inquiry. You do desire it: for I speak to those among you whose "faith hath made them the sons of God." To you it is the subject of many an anxious thought, of many a fervent prayer; in moments of solitude, of calm and quiet reflection, when the bustle of this busy world is thrown aside, in the silence of your chambers, in the sleepless hours of midnight, this aspiration often bursts from your lips, or arises unuttered in your heart, O, "that I might finish my course with joy!" that I might be able to look with a more perfect assurance upon a chamber of sickness and a bed of death.

Brethren, the one great principle of which I have spoken, the love of Christ,

is as powerful at the present moment as it was eighteen hundred years ago; do not disparage it by doubting its efficacy, or undervaluing its power. Be assured, if you possess it, it will do for you what it is daily doing for thousands, what it did for St. Paul: troubles, sorrows, trials, "none of these things shall move you," or loosen the anchor which you have cast within the veil; be of good courage, trusting implicitly to that all-sufficient Saviour, and living obediently in His fear and love, you shall "finish your course with joy;" it may not be, it probably will not be, amidst the raptures of a triumph, but it shall be with the peaceful composure of one who enjoys the fruits of a victory which his own right arm could not have purchased; you shall ere long be enabled to say, "thanks be to God, who hath given me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ."

LECTURE III.

Acts xx. 36, 37, 38.

AND WHEN HE HAD THUS SPOKEN, HE KNEELED DOWN AND PRAYED WITH THEM ALL. AND THEY ALL WEPT SORE, AND FELL ON PAUL'S NECK, AND KISSED HIM, SORROWING MOST OF ALL FOR THE WORDS WHICH HE SPAKE, THAT THEY SHOULD SEE HIS FACE NO MORE.

We are in the present lecture to continue our remarks upon the parting address of St. Paul to the elders of the Ephesian church; an address so replete with affectionate feeling and sound and profitable Christian advice, that every word is dear to us, and every sentence worthy to be engraven upon our hearts.

"And now," continues the apostle in the 25th verse, "behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."

To enter into the feeling with which these words were spoken by St. Paul, or received by his hearers, you must know, *experimentally*, something of the blessed and delightful union existing between a Christian minister and a Christian people. The present, indeed, are days in which many of the strongest ties of this spiritual relationship have been broken. There is much "running to and fro" in the religious world, and, no doubt, "knowledge is increased;" but there is little of that sober, contented attendance upon one stated ministry, so highly valued in the best ages of our church, so eminently fruitful in scriptural advantages to the soul, and so conducive to the promotion of the feeling to which I allude.

Blessed be God, however, such things though *rare*, are not, even yet, *absolutely unknown*. There still are churches in this favoured land, in which the minister can trace, sabbath after sabbath, throughout the year, the same occupiers of the same seats; a people, contented with scriptural truth unadorned by any of the artificial trappings of human eloquence; a people, loving the word of God for its own sake, and desiring "the sincere milk of that word that they may *grow* thereby;" churches, in which the same happy and devoted company assemble, time after time, around the table of their common Lord, and when any work of faith or labour of love is to be performed, come forward readily and cheerfully with the feelings and almost with the language of God's people of old, "Here am I, send *me*;" thus "bearing one another's burdens," and endeavouring so to "fulfil the law of Christ."

If there were nothing of this feeling among us, my beloved brethren, I should despair of interesting you in our subject for this morning; for while the connection between the Christian minister and the people committed to his charge, between the spiritual Father and his spiritual children, is the dearest, closest, and most durable which exists on earth, the strongest bond on this side heaven, it is, to the people of the world, an unintelligible mystery, which they neither possess the necessary knowledge to appreciate, nor the necessary sympathies to feel.

I need not say that it was deeply felt and cherished by St. Paul; and so perfectly aware was he of the reciprocity of this feeling, that he feared not the charge of egotism when he commenced this portion of his address in the words which I have read to you, "I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."

It was not the language of despondency, or the mere anticipation of a probable evil, it was the calm and settled conviction of one who spake by direct inspiration from the Spirit of God, "I *know*" that this is the last time we shall meet on earth. What earnestness must this knowledge have given to him who spake; what breathless attention; what ardent desire to treasure up every word that fell from his lips, on the part of those who heard. This was, indeed, speaking "as dying, unto dying men." And is such a feeling as this to be reserved only for these great occasions? Ought there not to be something of it, both on your parts and my own, brethren, every time we thus meet? We do not "know" that it shall be the last time; but is there no reason to fear that the identical congregation now assembled, every man, every woman, every child who composes it, shall never again re-assemble, until they together hear the

sound of the Archangel's trumpet, and stand together before the judgment-seat of Christ? What zeal, what heart-affecting zeal, should such a thought produce in the minister; what prayerful anxiety to benefit by the word spoken, in that, which to each may be his last discourse, should be excited in every individual in the congregation!

St. Paul, having thus secured a deep attention, proceeds; "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." May we, then, venture to hope from this, that St. Paul's ministry had been so prosperous, so uniformly successful, that not one soul had perished under it, that not one sinner had ever been hardened, by those beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which, through his instrumentality, had subdued, and softened, and melted others? No—we cannot hope this, even from

the preaching of St. Paul; that some even of his hearers fell away we cannot doubt; that one, at least, even at Ephesus, openly withstood his words, he tells us himself, (2 Tim. iv. 15;) that many heard, and neglected, and perished, there is too much reason to fear. How, then, could he declare that he was pure from the blood of all men? "When I say unto the wicked, 'O wicked man, thou shalt surely die,' if thou dost *not* speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at your hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked from his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Such are the words of God Himself. St. Paul was, therefore, pure from the blood of all men, not because all to whom he preached were saved, but because he had not "shunned to declare unto

them all the counsel of God." If they perished, their blood was upon their own heads, he was safe.

My brethren, if you value your own souls, if you love your ministers, can you, with such declarations as these before you, desire them to "speak unto you smooth things," to "prophesy deceits," to declare only such things as are palatable, such truths as even the natural heart can bear without reluctance or misgiving? These will not profit you. There are many among you, even now, we have too much reason to fear, who are sunk in indifference and self-indulgence, from which nothing but the most awakening appeals and the strong hand of our God can draw them; there are some, we fear, even at this moment, with the name of God upon their lips, and, as they imagine, His seal upon their forehead, living in a course of unhallowed enjoyment, or of secret sin; these are they to whom

St. Jude refers, when having said, "Of some have compassion, making a difference," he adds, "and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." It must be a holy violence which can alone disturb, and arouse, and alarm, and deliver them; gentle means have been tried, and tried in vain. They know the truths of the gospel, they have enjoyed its promises, they have cast aside its threatenings, they have trifled with its commands, its "still small voice" passes by them as the mere whisper of the summer breeze, they need the "great and strong wind," "the fire," and "the earthquake," before they will ever humble themselves, and turn wholly and devotedly to the God of their salvation. This, therefore, should be their language to us, Be faithful, be honest, be bold, and uncompromising; our wounds are deep, probe deeply, or you will never heal them; our hearts are hard, strike powerfully, or you will never break

them; if left to ourselves, we should choose only a part of the counsel of God; but do not "shun to declare" unto us all, tell us the whole, tell us the worst, that we may be led to fly from the wrath to come.

Brethren, according to our ability we desire to do so, we desire to "cry aloud and spare not," to set our face as a flint, to lift up our voice as a trumpet, to keep back nothing which can profit you, however painful; but alas! "Who is sufficient for these things?" Even St. Paul did not affirm that he *had* declared to them the whole counsel of God, but that he had "not *shunned* to declare" it, so far as the Spirit gave him utterance. He had spoken plainly and boldly, but even he did not venture to say that there was no single truth in the counsel of God which he had not laid before them, no threatening which he had not urged to the very utmost, no proof of redeeming love which he had

not magnified to the extremest limits of its illimitable extent, no weapons in heaven's armoury with which he had not pressed them, no gem in its treasury with which he had not presented them. If St. Paul could not say this, what then can we say? We can only say, "Brethren, pray for us," that whatever be the remedies which your maladies require, however distasteful or however painful, we may not shun to offer them; nor you, as you value your soul's present health and future happiness, to receive and to profit by them.

In the succeeding verses St. Paul, having given some valuable directions to the elders of the Ephesian church, thus affectingly commits them to the holy keeping of their heavenly Father: "And now, brethren, *I commend you to God*, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." We can readily

own son in the faith," but to God, and to the word of His grace, as "able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." How comforting to Christian friends, when about to separate, to be able thus to commend each other to an unseen God, to an all-present Saviour, and to a revealed and written word. There may be many in passing through life, in whose spiritual welfare you are deeply interested, and yet from whom you are constantly and necessarily absent: many, perhaps, so circumstanced, that they are unable to partake of the spiritual advantages under which you live; how highly encouraging, then, is it, that in all such cases you are able to commend them, not only to God, but to His written word, which, thanks be to God, in this favored country cannot be taken from them, and which St. Paul here distinctly declares "is able to build them up," for their future and unfading

inheritance. Bear this in mind, brethren, in all your communications with persons so circumstanced; it is, indeed, a serious privation that they should be distant from the life-giving ordinances of a gospel ministry, but it is not, in cases over which the inclination has no control, an irreparable privation. In commending your friends, so situated, to God, commend them also with confidence to "the word of His grace;" if, as Chillingworth has truly declared, "The Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants," you are here on sure and certain ground; ministers may be taken from them, or may even mislead them; "grievous wolves may enter in, not sparing the flock;" but amid the green pastures and still waters of the "word of God's grace," and under the guidance of the Chief Shepherd, the weakest lamb of the fold shall neither stumble nor fall. If you are unable to do more than this for those you love,

you cannot, you ought not to do less—urge them by every consideration most awakening and most influential, urge them by the value of that soul within them which is perishing for lack of knowledge, and by the Saviour who died for its redemption, to search the word of God's grace frequently, daily; however small be the portion to which their time and opportunities may limit them, if it be accompanied by earnest, fervent prayer, it shall not be lost; it is an omnipotent word, it cannot return void to Him who sends it, but is powerful, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of ignorance and sin, and to the building up to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" "all them who are sanctified." Many, many souls now beyond the reach of temptation and trial, have been led to God through the instrumentality of the written word alone, unaided by human comments or human teaching; and how-

ever man in the pride of his vaunted wisdom, or rather of his matchless ignorance, may pronounce the revealed word of our God too deep for the unlearned, and too obscure for the young, and too complicated for the simple, on that great and coming day when all hearts shall be laid open and all histories told, God will vindicate His word to the confusion of His enemies, and will prove before assembled worlds that infinite in wisdom, He well knew without the aid of man, how to speak to the heart and to the soul of the poorest, weakest, most degraded of the sons of fallen Adam.

St. Paul having committed his brethren to God's holy keeping, and reminded them of that noble disinterestedness which formed so striking a feature in his character, concludes by urging them to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

There is something not unworthy of remark in the manner in which the apostle thus terminates his parting address; he finishes with an injunction of his Master, and one, valuable as it is, which had been omitted by all the evangelists. He does not, like an accomplished orator, at the close of his discourse concentrate the thoughts and the affections of his hearers upon himself, but by one of the most touching turns throughout the whole address, he leads them past himself to the Saviour whom he loved, and reminds them of one of the most beautiful observations of that Saviour, which had been overlooked by the evangelists amidst the riches of the gospel feast, but is now gathered up by St. Paul as one of the fragments that had fallen from the Master's table.

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on

Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." How deeply affecting must not such a parting as this have been! the *last time* they should see his face in the flesh, who had been the blessed instrument of leading them to see God's face in the spirit! If it be much to part with Christian friends even for a little season, with every hope of again embracing them on earth, how much more is it to look upon them for the last time, to hear the last word, to receive the last sigh; to know that the sweet counsels we have taken together have drawn to a close, that our meetings in Christian fellowship here are over, that the House of our God and the Table of our Lord shall be visited together no more. This is, indeed, among the trying, among the most trying visitations of the children of God, and to this, St. Paul and his brethren were

now summoned: we are not, therefore, surprised to find that the apostle himself was not unmoved, that no eye was without tears—"they *all* wept sore,"—and yet that parting hour was not without its pleasures, "he kneeled down, and prayed with them all." What a comfort to the Christian, in every hour of trial or of sorrow, is prayer! an intercourse with his Lord which no power on earth can interrupt. Would that the holy Spirit had seen fit to record this prayer of the apostle, how valuable a gift would it have been in this parting world! But although we know not what the apostle said, we cannot be ignorant of what he felt, for the heart of man answereth to the heart of man, "as in water face answereth to face." Doubtless the desires of his heart were, that his own bodily presence might be more than supplied to those he loved, by the spiritual presence of his Master; that amidst all

the trials and temptations of the world in which he left them, they might be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," and that it would please God "shortly to accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His kingdom," that both he and they might again meet, but in a land where the tear of parting never falls, and that sad word, "Farewell," is never spoken.

The chapter concludes by informing us that "they accompanied him unto the ship." Desirous of going as far, and remaining as long with him as was permitted them, they went with the apostle even to the water's edge, yet there they were compelled to leave him. Beloved brethren, it is an affecting thought that there is a point at which our dearest bonds must be broken, our closest relationships dissolved, our most attached friends leave us—a point at which husbands and wives, parents and chil-

dren, ministers and people, must part. We may travel together long and profitably and peacefully, but it cannot be uninterruptedly. A parting hour must arrive, when "one shall be taken and the other left." Both may go together to the water's edge, but you must enter those waters singly and alone—Jordan must be passed, and on its banks all that is earthly must be left behind.—Would you so part that you may be reunited, that when that flood is crossed, you may meet again in the celestial city? It is now within your power—the offer, the hope, the certainty are all within your reach. Instead of separating from those you love with the feeling of those Ephesian Christians, "we shall see his face no more," in all your separations, even the most painful and the last, if you are, indeed, the children of the same Saviour, the possessors of the same hope, anchored

within the veil, sure and stedfast, your feelings may rightly be, "Blessed be God, we shall see their face again." This is a sharp trial, but it is a short one. The river is stormy and its floods are deep, but it is neither wide nor impassable; and although our truly scriptural church has most affectingly taught us to say, "Suffer us not, through any pains of death, to fall from Thee," yet may we humbly hope that no child of God was ever lost in those dark waters, for has not your Lord himself declared, by the mouth of His prophet, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." He now offers Himself as your guardian and your guide; He who, when all other friends must leave you at the brink, will descend with you into the troubled waves, and still them with His voice, and bear you up in His arms amidst

the "swellings of Jordan," and never leave you or forsake you until He has carried you once again into the company of those you loved on earth, and from whom you shall be no more separated throughout eternity!

LECTURE IV.

Acts xxi. 13.

I AM READY, NOT TO BE BOUND ONLY, BUT ALSO TO DIE AT JERUSALEM, FOR THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.

St. Paul, after that affecting parting from his friends at Ephesus, which formed the conclusion of the last lecture, proceeded on his voyage to Jerusalem. We are informed in the third verse that he "landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unlade her burden." It is scarcely possible to read that well-known declaration of our Lord, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works had

been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes," without feeling from that moment a melancholy interest in the fate of the cities thus alluded to. We are tempted to think, if this be true, if Tyre and Sidon would have so highly valued the means of grace, why were they not bestowed? And although we know that the apostle's answer to all such enquiries would be, "Nay but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor?" yet it is impossible not to read with pleasure the fact which the evangelist announces, when he tells us that in Tyre, yes, in that city in which but a few short years before, the name and the gospel of the Saviour were alike unknown, there were now true and sincere believers, whole families, as it

would appear many families, who were disciples of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Though for a time passed over, therefore, these cities were not utterly rejected; and from the incidental mention of them before us, we have the comfort of knowing how speedily the truth of our Lord's declaration became apparent by the fact that the Tyrians *did* receive, to the salvation of their souls, that Saviour whom Chorazin and Bethsaida utterly rejected. Wherever the true disciples of Jesus were to be found, thither the affectionate apostle of whom we speak, seems always to have been irresistibly drawn, and there to have been willingly detained. Accordingly, for seven days St. Paul tarried at Tyre, enjoying the refreshment of Christian intercourse, and doubtless edifying the minds and strengthening the hearts of these Tyrian believers. While there, a circumstance occurred which at first sight is a little apt to perplex the simple

reader of holy writ, for we are told in the fourth verse that these believers "said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." You will recollect that we had been distinctly told in the preceding chapter by St. Paul himself, "I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem," proving that he went thither under the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost. When, therefore, we are here told that the disciples at Tyre attempted to dissuade him "through the Spirit" from going up, we are apt to inquire, Can then the Holy Ghost contradict Himself? can He change His purposes? can He give one direction to His servants to-day, and a contrary one to-morrow? It is evident that this is impossible; all, therefore, that is intended by the expression before us is, that when the disciples at Tyre said to St. Paul, "through the Spirit," that he should not go, they spake through the information which the Spirit had given

them of the apostle's intentions of going, and perhaps of his approaching trials, but by no means that the advice which they offered, was also through the same unchangeable Spirit. Indeed, the conduct of St. Paul sufficiently proves that this was not the fact, for he permitted neither their reasons nor their entreaties to possess the smallest weight with him, but at once, and without delay, prosecuted his intended journey. We are accordingly told in the following verse, "and when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city, and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed." How beautiful and affecting a scene was this—the whole Christian population of Tyre assembled on the sea-shore at one great sacrifice of prayer and praise. It is to the true Christian alone that all the common events of life are thus sanc-

tified and thus hallowed. His greetings, his partings, his social and domestic assemblies, are all with God. His Father is excluded from no meeting, his Lord is absent from no parting in which a child of God is engaged. This is the realization even while on earth, of that "communion of saints," and union with our glorified Head, which shall be perfected in the kingdom of our Father. The worldly man parts with his friends, his family, his nearest and closest connexions, and knows nothing of the comfort of a parting prayer, nothing of the confidence which the feeling of an all-present God, and that God a covenant God, to whom he may commit those who are dear to him, can alone impart; it is the true Christian only who can say, with Jacob of old, "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another."

St. Paul, while parting from these Tyrian disciples, was not, as at Ephesus,

merely surrounded by the elders of the church, the wives and children of the believers were united with them in this affecting scene. It is delightful to discover by such little traits as these, how early and how important was the advancement in civilization produced by the gospel. In the most polished state of society in the heathen world, what was woman? A mere toy, a gilded bauble to help to wile away a vacant hour, but admitted to no partnership in the higher and more elevating actions or feelings of human life. But no sooner did the gospel, with its lessons of Christian love, find its way into the heart, than woman resumed that place in society to which God in His mercy had originally appointed her. She became the help-meet for man, his ready partner in every sorrow and in every joy; not merely the unintellectual companion of his pleasures, but the true and sympathising friend, as valuable, perhaps more valu-

able, in the darker hours of sicknesses, and griefs, and trials, and partings, than in those brighter and happier moments in which alone she had, before the introduction of Christianity, been ever heard of. Every wife, and even every child, of these Tyrian converts, assembled upon this deeply interesting occasion; all accompanied the apostle; all knelt with him on the sea-shore; all united with the beautiful equality of Christian love in his last prayer; and all were alike partakers of his parting blessing.

Wherever true religion, the religion of Jesus, advances, there does this Christian equality advance with it, never, indeed, interfering with that distinction so often and so plainly stated in God's own word, that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church," but elevating the wife to that distinguished place in Christian society, and investing her with that true dignity as far removed from

the debased condition of the mere sensualist of the heathen world, as from the burlesque importance of the heroine of chivalry and romance.

After the abode of a single day at Ptolemais, we find from the evangelist that they who were of Paul's company came unto Cesarea, and entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven, and abode with him. We find from the sixth chapter of Acts that Philip was one of those "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," of whom Stephen was chief, who were selected to distribute the alms of the primitive Christians in the daily ministration. We hear of him again in the eighth chapter, called by a remarkable interposition of providence to baptize the Ethiopian eunuch, and after this service returning to Cesarea, where he was still dwelling at the time of the apostle's visit. Philip, who had now become an evangelist, which

was an order in the church next in rank to the apostles themselves, gladly received St. Paul into his house. He was, evidently, a married man; a sufficient answer to the Romish dogma of the celibacy of the clergy in the first ages of Christianity. While St. Paul and his companions tarried at his house, the following incident occurred, marking strongly the usages of those days, in which the symbolical mode of communicating ideas, so prevalent in the earlier times of the prophets, had not been entirely discontinued. "There came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus." This was the same person who seventeen years before, as we are told in the eleventh chapter, "had signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world;" the fulfilment of which prophecy (which had already taken place) would naturally make the disciples doubly anxious to hear what testimony

so gifted a person would bear to the future destiny of their beloved St. Paul. Accordingly, when they were assembled together, Agabus "came unto them, and taking Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it, and said, 'Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" So truly had St. Paul declared in the preceding chapter, "the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions abide me." In every city, almost in every house into which he entered, the same mournful note was struck; how deeply trying to the natural man, how appalling in the weaker moments and the more uncertain actings of faith even to the spiritual believer; yet was not this the whole with which St. Paul had to contend; it was not merely the constant prediction of approaching evil, but, far more difficult to bear, the equally con-

stant weakness of misjudging friends. "When we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem." What is man, even at his best estate, but infirmity, but folly? "Both we," even "they of Paul's company," they who had heard the voice of God repeatedly calling His servant to the "great things he was to *suffer* for His name's sake," were just as anxious, just as solicitous as others, in urging him against the fulfilment of the divine command. Peter's "spare thyself," that faithless and faint-hearted advice which drew down from his divine Master the severest rebuke He ever uttered, has left behind it in the church a sadly influential example. To our blessed Lord, indeed, such faithless advice was perfectly innocuous. "When the prince of this world cometh, he hath nothing in me," said the perfect Jesus. He was holy, harmless, undefiled; there were no evil propensities in His breast,

to form the ready allies of the powers of darkness. It was far different with St. Paul, it is far different with ourselves. Be careful, therefore, brethren, that you do not aid our spiritual enemies in their attacks upon the hearts of believers, by your mistaken affection, and exaggerated dangers, and unnecessary cautions. Satan is as often successful in this device as in any other of his exhaustless resources. Is a servant of God labouring in His great and blessed cause, whether it be in the instruction of the children of the poor, or in visiting their dwellings, or even in the higher or more important duties of the ministry itself, with some little degree of energy, and earnestness, and zeal, however far below the great and urgent calls upon him, then are there sure to be those around him, often those of his own family, who are anxious to restrain his efforts and impede his usefulness by exaggerated views of the

danger to his health, of the importance of preserving himself for future services, (which may never arrive) and many other excuses equally plausible and equally serviceable in forwarding the great counter-scheme of our spiritual enemy, by deadening the efforts of the servants of the Lord. There is, I fear, often much of sin in this, although, perhaps, undiscovered by those who are guilty of it. It is a matter in which, surely, the counsel and the guidance of our God are fully sufficient to direct His servants; and when you are opposing what you consider only natural tastes and inclinations, how know you that you are not thwarting the dispensation of the Most High, and, in the end, may be found to have been fighting against God?

So was it, evidently, with St. Paul's friends at Cesarea, when they besought him not to go to that very place to which the good providence of God had

so distinctly called him. Observe his bold and truly faithful reply; "Then Paul answered, What, mean ye to weep and to break mine heart; for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." What sincere affection and tenderness mingled with his boldness! he confesses that the sight of his weeping friends would go nigh to break his heart, although he declares it could have no influence whatever upon his resolution. His course was taken in the strength as well as at the bidding of his Lord, and welcome bonds, welcome death itself, if he may but preach the gospel which he loved, and die for the Saviour whom he adored. Happy will it be for every one among us, if we possess within our breast this principle, even the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, which can alone render us equal to such a sacrifice. It is true that we are not called to bonds or to death, to

testify the strength of our affection; but where is the Christian who carries about with him a body of sin and death, who is not called to a daily martyrdom, to a constant warfare, for that great name's sake? O, it is not at the stake that men usually shrink from the fiery trial, and deny the Lord who bought them: it is not there that their faith fails, and that they fall from their stedfastness, or disgrace their high and heavenly calling. For such an awful hour as that, there has usually been a long course of holy preparation; prayer, earnest, faithful, persevering prayer, has been offered by them and for them, with unremitting fervour, and the good Spirit of our God, thus faithfully sought, does not desert His children at that trying season. No! it is amid the daily, hourly trifles of common life, in the sunshine of prosperity and the calm of uninterrupted peace, that the Christian too frequently makes shipwreck of his

hope; like those gallant vessels of which all have read, which after weathering many a tempest, and outliving many a storm, have sunk in the harbour, when the sky was unclouded, and there was no ripple on the wave. These are the seasons, the sunshine hours of life, in which you most require the powerful and enduring principle of love to the Lord Jesus Christ to reign within your breast. The very same individual who, when the time of deadly trial came, would brace up his resolution to the requirement, and, strong in the strength of the Saviour whom he loved, would ascend the scaffold with unhesitating foot, or look with unblanched cheek upon the fires of martyrdom, will shrink from an act of trifling self-denial, or cowardly turn aside from an acknowledged duty, or suppress an unpalatable opinion, from the indescribable and contemptible fear of men, whom, in his heart, he utterly despises. It is,

then, for these lesser trials and petty martyrdoms that you must seek a deeper and more abiding sense of love to our adorable Redeemer; it is the only principle which can enable you to subdue your own wayward tempers, to correct your own rebellious will, to rise superior alike to the smiles or frowns of your fellow-sinners, and to "endure hardness," as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, whenever His name, or His honor, or His word, or His people, need your countenance and your support.

Continuing the narrative, we read, the well-meant advice of St. Paul's friends proving fruitless, "When he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."

It would have been well had they said this sooner, and before they had caused the faithful and affectionate apostle so much unnecessary pain; but alas! brethren, how few are enabled

to say and to feel this at all, how very few, precisely at the proper moment! It is the last lesson which the child of God learns perfectly, even in the school of affliction itself. Yet some there are, we trust in every generation of God's people, who do learn and practise it, as those who have, indeed, been taught of God. It is recorded of the truly pious Fenelon, that, when standing by the dead body of his most valued friend, he gave utterance to this sublime and Christian sentiment: "There lies my friend, and, with him, all my hopes of earthly happiness; but if the moving of a straw would bring him back to life again, I would not be the mover of that straw, without the will of my God, for a thousand worlds." This, indeed, is real Christianity, an entire conformity of man's will to God's will. Let this be your one great aim in passing through life, to know no will but God's; to have your own will so

identified with God's will, so moulded into His, that nothing which He ordains, nothing which He permits, can disappoint, or grieve, or perplex you. There is nothing enthusiastic, nothing overstrained in this feeling; nothing which does not approve itself as readily to the soundest judgment, as to the most ardent affection. For what is God's will upon every occasion which can occur in the life of a child of God? Is it not precisely that which, if you could see with perfect prescience, and arrange with perfect wisdom, you would, each for himself, unquestionably select? to the real Christian, it does not admit of a doubt that such is the fact; in the will of his Lord, whether manifested towards him in the way of sorrows or of joys, he simply sees the will of his Friend, One who so loved him, even while an enemy and an alien, as to die for him; One who surely cannot love him less, since he

has brought him to Himself.—In every dispensation of the will of his Lord, therefore, he sees that which he is assured Eternity will unquestionably justify, by proving, even to his own comprehension, that every act of that will has been either among his needful food, or his necessary medicines, on the road which leads to Zion. Do I, then, at this moment address any to whom the dispensations of God's will have been often filled with sorrow; and, in this vale of tears, where was there ever yet a large assemblage of Christians, in which no secret mourner found a place? I would say to you, Be not tempted to complain that however the "will of God" may thus be kindness and mercy to others, it is harshness and severity to you; that He has taken from you your most valued comforts or your most cherished joys; your health, your property, your husband, your wife, your child, your only child.

If you are indeed a true believer, the severest privation will not induce you to rebel against the will of your God. Far, very far from it; although for the present "no chastening seemeth joyous, but grievous," as even St. Paul himself declares, yet it will not be long before you will do ample justice to Him who chastens you; when "patience has had her perfect work," and faith is once more in exercise, you will think nothing too good for God; you will even acknowledge, as was beautifully expressed by one of old, that "the choicest, the fairest, the sweetest flowers, are fittest for the bosom of God: that if He has taken the best flower in all your garden to plant it in a better soil, you have far more call for gratitude than for repinings, and you will still endeavour, prayerfully endeavour, to say from your heart, 'The will of the Lord be done.'"

Christian brethren, if you desire true

peace of mind, even here below, you must endeavour to realize a large measure of this hallowed feeling: if you hope to join the worshippers in the courts above, you must, by grace, attain to its complete possession; your will must be swallowed up in God's will. Without this entire conformity, heaven would be no heaven to you, were you to find yourself, at this moment, among its blessed inhabitants; for it is the will of God, and that alone, which awakens the harps of angels, and gives all the brightness to their crowns, and all the glory to their song; it is the will of God, and that alone, which throughout eternity, century by century, and year by year, and moment by moment, has sustained, and will sustain, the heaven of heavens, and all its unnumbered multitudes, from dropping into annihilation and perdition; it is the will of God, and that alone, for ever perfectly, cheerfully, and un-

ceasingly fulfilled, which itself constitutes heaven. Surely, then, under every circumstance, the desire of our hearts should be, "The will of the Lord be done;" and our daily prayer, whether in acting or suffering, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

LECTURE V.

Acts xxi. 26.

THEN PAUL TOOK THE MEN, AND THE NEXT DAY PURIFYING HIMSELF WITH THEM, ENTERED INTO THE TEMPLE, TO SIGNIFY THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE DAYS OF PURIFICATION, UNTIL THAT AN OFFERING SHOULD BE OFFERED FOR EVERY ONE OF THEM.

AFTER a journey marked by those most affecting and instructive particulars which we have already reviewed, St. Paul arrived at Jerusalem. Here, had we not been forewarned of the contrary, we might have hoped that his trials and his troubles would have ceased; or if this were too much to expect for the sincere and faithful follower of our Lord in this world of

sorrow, that, at any rate, some little respite might have been afforded for his solace and repose. From the circumstances which now present themselves, we shall find how erroneous would have been all such anticipations, that as the eventide approached, storms and tempests thickened round his path, and that the clouds which now were gathering were never afterwards totally dispersed, but formed that dark and cheerless sunset in which his day of worldly services was closed for ever.

Upon arriving at Jerusalem, we read that "the brethren received him gladly," and that "the day following he went in unto James, and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry." How delightful must have been this meeting! How glorious the account which, by God's blessing, this faithful apostle

was enabled to render! How must his hearers have rejoiced to listen to every detail of those wonderful achievements, far more interesting than were ever told to admiring senates by the conquerors of the earth, of the power of divine grace which, by "the foolishness of preaching," had overcome the philosophic pride of the Areopagite, and subdued the rugged nature of the barbarous jailor, with as much facility as it had melted the heart of the tender Lydia. Surely few eyes were dry in that assembly, when St. Paul narrated his parting scene with the elders at Ephesus, and when he told them, as he doubtless did, that he was come among them not to repose after such unparalleled labours, but to meet, cheerfully to meet, those bonds and imprisonments which had been predicted, in every city in which he had set his foot. When his narrative was concluded, we are informed, with the beautiful brevity

of scripture history, "And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord." Blessed proof that they had been rightly instructed in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! They did not glorify the poor, weak, erring instrument of God's mercy, but they gave the glory, where alone it was due, to God Himself. They glorified that Lord, by whose grace St. Paul had himself been brought from a persecutor and blasphemer to be a believer and a son; by whose great Name alone, he had performed the wonders which had marked his course, and by whose good Spirit alone, he had been the honored instrument of "turning many to righteousness."

The conference which follows, and the circumstances which grew out of it, are among the most difficult and perplexing points in the history we are pursuing; so perplexing, indeed, that from the fear of deciding wrongfully

upon so contested a subject, I would most gladly have omitted it altogether, had I not felt myself bound in justice to the duty in which I have engaged, to bring every incident of importance in the life of St. Paul plainly before you.

To understand the details of the circumstance upon which we are entering, I must remind you that the Jews, throughout the world, were divided at the time of which we are speaking, into three distinct and separate parties. First, there were the great majority of those who dwelt at Jerusalem who adhered, nominally at least, and many doubtless in sincerity, to the religion of their forefathers, believing Christianity to be a fable, and its author an impostor. Next, there was a body of converted Jews, probably not a very large one, who believed that together with the reception of the gospel, the observance of the laws and institutions of Moses were in all cases actually

necessary to salvation, and that unless the believer in the Lord Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile, were a circumcised attendant upon all the duties of the ceremonial law, his new religion would profit him nothing. Thirdly,—and the great mass of Jewish converts to Christianity were of this order,—there were many who retained all the institutions of Moses, together with the faith they had recently adopted, but, after the decided opinion given upon this subject, at the first general council held in Jerusalem,[a] did not believe that these institutions were actually necessary to their justification, and were content that the Gentile converts should not observe them, but were most determined and bigotted advocates for the maintenance of this ceremonial law by the Jewish converts.

Bearing these distinctions in mind, you will understand that it was this

[a] See Lecture xi. Part I. History of St. Paul.

last class, to which the elders at Jerusalem, with their bishop St. James, alluded, when they thus addressed St. Paul at the conference of which we are now speaking. "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law," *i. e.* are all anxious that the ceremonial law of Moses should be observed and honoured; "and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs."— "Do, therefore, this that we say unto thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; them take and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads; and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself, also, walkest orderly and

keepest the law."—The elders concluded by affirming that they still adhered to the opinion given in the general council before alluded to, that the Gentile converts should observe "no such thing."

St. Paul, following the advice thus tendered, purified himself with the men who had already taken upon them the Nazarite's vow, and entered with them into the Temple, to observe the same ceremonies, and partake of the same ordinances. I mentioned, at the commencement of this incident, that it was most perplexing, and you will see at once whence this perplexity arises. The difficulty to determine, is this: Were the elders at Jerusalem justified in thus advising St. Paul, for the purposes of conciliation, to assume an interest in ceremonial observances, which they well knew were passing away, and to appear a rigid observer of that law at Jerusalem, which he had evidently discountenanced elsewhere? Again: Was

St. Paul justified in acceding to their request, in identifying himself with these judaizing Christians, and, for the purpose of overcoming an unworthy prejudice, in assisting to strengthen their respect for ordinances which his own more enlightened conscience told him were of none avail? We will endeavour to consider this in all humility and with all impartiality, only premising, that as St. Paul unquestionably erred in other instances upon which we have already commented, there is nothing presumptuous in admitting the possibility that his conduct may not have been perfect upon this occasion. The Bible narrative makes no comment upon the good or evil which we find in any of its biographies, but simply states the circumstances as they occur, and then leaves them, when plainly narrated, to be judged of according to the ability which God gives us, and the promised aid of the divine Spirit. Bearing

this in mind, we proceed, impartially, to consider St. Paul's conduct in the present instance. First, then, Does it appear from what we have already seen of his history, that he was the scrupulous adherent of the ceremonial law, which the elders wished him to appear to be in the eyes of his brethren in Jerusalem? It is true that we are informed in the 16th chapter, that St. Paul, to meet the prejudices of the Jews, had consented to circumcise Timothy; and that upon another occasion we are told he had "shorn his head at Cenchrea, for he had a vow;" and these instances, therefore, might fairly be adduced to prove that he was not, upon every occasion, a determined neglector of the ceremonial law: but are they not rather exceptions to his general course of conduct, than fair and uniform specimens of it? Do we not find him, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, speaking thus:

"When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision." And a few verses after, in speaking of himself, he says, "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Now it certainly appears that his conduct at Jerusalem was not perfectly in accordance with these declarations. We are aware that he did not mean to imply, by joining himself to the four Nazarites in the Temple, that such ceremonial observance was in the least degree necessary to salvation; but what did he intend to imply by it? His intention clearly was this; to convey to the converts at Jerusalem, who were

zealous for the law, something more than the mere belief that St. Paul considered it a matter of innocent superstition, or at the best, of indifference; it was evidently intended to demonstrate that St. Paul was, under no circumstances, a neglector of that law, but, in fact, as habitual and consistent a keeper of it, as they themselves. "That all may know," is the reason given; "that all may know that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law." This, then, is the point which appears to stamp some degree of disingenuousness upon this action of the apostle. His epistles, whether to converted Gentiles or converted Jews, are full of declarations to the contrary. We hear him at one time saying to the Galatian converts, "Ye observe days and months, and times and years:" the new moons, and festivals, and sabbatical years of the Jews: and he immediately adds, "I am afraid of you, lest I have

bestowed upon you labour in vain: brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are." Be as free from all these ceremonial observances as you observe me to be, and mix nothing with the simple faith and dependence of the gospel. It may, indeed, be said that the Galatians having been heathens, St. Paul, who "became all things to all men, that he might by all means gain some," was justified in thus appearing before them indifferent to the law: and if he had confined all such observations entirely to his writings to those only who had once been Gentiles, there would be some weight in the objection; but this is not the fact, for we find him speaking quite as disrespectfully of the ceremonial law, in his epistle to the Hebrews, which was addressed expressly to the Jewish Christians in Judea, as he does to the Galatians; and in the closing chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, he shows dis-

tinctly that the ceremonial law had passed away; and even asserts, "We have an altar," alluding to the Lord's Supper, "whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle;" implying that the observance of the Jewish ceremonial law was not comp tible with the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free; and that a strict adherence to it dep·ived the believer of his right to partake of Christian ordinances. Weighing, therefore, carefully all these circumstances, I would with humility state that I arrive at a conclusion different from that of some of our most judicious commentators, that, in this instance, both the elders at Jerusalem, and St. Paul himself, were too much influenced by the doctrine of expediency, and departed in some degree from "the simplicity that is in Christ." I cannot but think that for the sake of peace, from the hope of recommending the religion of the Lord Jesus to

those whose views were as yet clouded by the remains of Jewish error, the apostle was led, in some degree, to temporize, to conform to customs, of which, in his conscience, he could not thoroughly approve, and thus, in some little degree, to descend from that lofty eminence upon which his fervent faith and undaunted courage had placed him, and to mingle too much in the arena with the weak, the worldly-minded, and the wavering, or at least with the bigotted, uncompromising, and uninformed.

It is scarcely possible to imagine any thing so disappointing to the good intentions of all engaged in it, as the event of this concession of the apostle. Speaking after the fashion of men, it was the most disastrous circumstance of his life. Every thing that the elders had foreboded came immediately to pass, and their worst fears were realized by the very method they adopted to avert them. "The Jews which were of Asia,"

so the evangelist informs us, "when they saw him in the Temple," instead of being induced by this expedient to believe St. Paul to be a conscientious observer of the ceremonial law, "stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him," falsely accusing him of bringing Greeks into the Temple, and polluting the holy place. "And all the city was moved, and the people ran together, and they took Paul and drew him out of the Temple. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar; who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them; and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul." We dare not judge of the guilt or innocency of men's actions by their events, or we should say that the blessing of God certainly did not rest upon this act of carnal policy, for it immediately led to this cruel treatment,

and subsequently to that long imprisonment and banishment of the apostle, from which he was never afterwards released; closing his days, as you are well aware, an exile, and, finally, a martyr, in a foreign land. Upon this, however, I would not raise the shadow of an argument; the present is not a world of retribution, either for good or evil; and many have been the actions of the best of men, which have brought with them disgrace, and obloquy, and death, and yet which shall assuredly receive the commendation of our divine Master on that great and coming day. If, however, the view which we have taken, with respect to this action of the apostle, be the just one, it is impossible to pass it by, without attempting to derive from it the important lesson that it so plainly teaches: viz. That the real Christian should steadily, perseveringly, and undauntedly, preserve the straight and narrow path marked out for him

by his Lord, and never, from a mistaken desire of conciliating the opponents of vital Christianity, swerve a single step, either as to doctrines or practice, from that which in his heart he believes to be the truth of God. The argument which we are for ever hearing, from the mouths of persons who advocate a certain degree of conformity to those who differ from us upon these great and essential subjects, is of this nature: Much may be done by meeting your opponents half way; if you give up a little of the non-essentials of religion, they will give up much of the spirit of hostility to its essentials in return. Your occasional intercourse in questionable pursuits with the people of the world, for instance, will possess a beneficial effect upon them; it will have a tendency to subdue their prejudices against a serious and scriptural view of divine truth, to conciliate their affections, or, at least, to increase their respect towards the people of God;

and, above all, to render future opportunities of promoting their spiritual interests more easy to you. My brethren,—and I speak now only to those among you who have "tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost," and confess it to be sinful to mingle in ungodly society for any other object than the charitable one to which I have alluded,—I really believe this argument, notwithstanding its plausibility, to be most erroneous and most dangerous: *most erroneous*, because the word of God expressly declares that we shall "not do evil, that good may come:" however minute the evil, and however apparently grand and magnificent the good, the principle remains the same, and if you value the word of your God, will not be intentionally violated by you: *most dangerous*, because it almost uniformly happens that in endeavouring to benefit others, when not in the direct and obvious path

of duty yourselves, we contract far more of evil than we impart of good. If you are desirous to work and to fight for God, you must never forget that no blessing is promised, no lasting success can result, unless you work with God's tools, and fight with God's weapons. Is it replied to this, that even our Lord "eat and drank with publicans and sinners," and that none found fault with Him but the hypocritical Pharisees? We answer, our Lord came expressly "to seek and to save them that were lost;" and where should the Shepherd seek the wandering sheep, but in those strange pastures whither it has strayed?

This example, therefore, will not serve you, unless you can produce as plain a commission as our Lord, and unless you can show that you never enter into ungodly society except to bear as open, as uncompromising a testimony against its followers and its sins, as He did. Be assured that there is no

common ground upon which the Christian and the worldling can meet with mutual benefit or safety, except it be simply for necessary worldly business, or the common civilities of life. To venture upon more than this, unless where these legitimate exceptions, the ties of affinity, or the bonds of former friendship, demand it, "cometh of evil;" it is a grievous mistake to suppose that the world ever meets the Christian half way; the world will advance to meet you just so far as it can bring its follies, and its selfishness, and its hostility to the spirituality of the doctrines and requirements of the gospel with it, but not one step will it advance beyond it. There is no real reciprocity in its civilities; it yields nothing, it surrenders nothing; every renouncement must be made by the Christian, and by the Christian alone, in this unholy alliance; and in return for such renunciations, what do you obtain? For your sacrifice

of conscience, of the will of your God, of the honor of your Redeemer, for this will is broken, and this honor compromised by your concession, the world proffers you its hollow flatteries, and its fallacious smiles, and its empty and worthless regards; and when it has deceived you into the acceptance and the love of them, it laughs to scorn, as a very bye word and a proverb, the Christian's weakness and the Christian's folly. Is it not so? Then look at compromising Christians in public life, men upon whose Christian conscientiousness large, very large demands are continually made and answered; what effect have their acknowledged Christian principles upon those who make such demands? Are these principles more honored, more highly valued, more imitated? On the contrary, are not their wavering possessors pitied and prayed for by the humble, consistent Christian, despised

by the very men with whom they act, respected by none? Look again at the compromising Christian in private life; are his friends really led to honor religion more, because he has lowered the high and lofty standard of spirituality and holiness which she has unfurled above his head? Is he more useful in the circle in which he moves? is he more respected in his own family, who know him best? is he more honored as the instrument of bringing sinners to his Lord?

Alas! my brethren, you know that the contrary to all this is unquestionably the fact, and that the man who, while he continued the bold and uncompromising soldier of the cross, was honored, and respected, and beloved, by all whose regards were worthy of his possession, sinks into insignificance and uselessness, the moment his Master beholds the costly sacrifice at which he is willing to purchase the regards

of an ungodly world. Be not then deceived, brethren, by the too successful delusion, that you can really serve the cause of God, and reconcile the people of the world to it, by unnecessarily mingling with them, and attracting to yourself their admiration and regards. There must usually be much given up, much suppressed, much practised on your part, which an enlightened and tender conscience ought to shrink from, before you can effect this. And, after all, how mortifying is this reflection, that if you are a child of God, it is only the unsanctified part of your character which the ungodly portion of the world delights in, for it is only the unsanctified part of your character which it can appreciate and understand.

Doubt yourself, therefore, examine yourself, pray to God "to try your very heart and reins," if you are popular in worldly society; depend

upon it, it arises far more from the deficiency of Christian feelings and Christian principles in your life and conversation, than from their excess. In exact proportion as you resemble your Lord in meekness, in lowliness, in poverty of spirit, in fidelity to the cause of your God, in bearing an open testimony against the practices of an ungodly world, you will resemble Him also in this, that "He was despised and rejected of men." Do not, therefore, for a little short-lived popularity, or dangerous enjoyment, or mistaken usefulness, descend from the dignified elevation of the true Christian, to mingle in the vain and heartless society of those whose tastes, and feelings, and pursuits, are hostile to the spirit of your Lord's gospel, and to the nature of His kingdom. "Now are ye the sons of God," says an apostle, speaking to the true believers of every age: how glorious an

appellation! and can you, ought you, for any purpose and under any consideration, to make common cause with those, all of whose pursuits are lighter, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, than vanity itself, and too many of which have been pronounced to be, by the word of our God, far worse than this,—even "earthly, sensual, devilish." Such language will, I fear, to many, appear harsh and uncharitable, and even offensive, though it be the word of God Himself; but, my beloved brethren, this is too important a subject, and too deeply affecting the best interests of your eternity, to permit me to be very careful in that matter. Better, far better, that I should offend many, even by speaking harshly, which I would at no time willingly do, than that I should injure one by speaking ambiguously or obscurely upon so essential a point of Christian conduct.

You cannot be told too often or too plainly, that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" that by every concession, every compromise with His enemies, our Lord is "wounded in the house of His friends;" and that every instance of such conduct on the part of His believing people, while it grieves His divine Spirit, must eventually bring sorrow and suffering to their own hearts. I would, therefore, most solemnly address a few words to those among you, if such there be, who are at the present moment engaged in such a course as that which I am now deprecating. You have been led by the sovereign grace of God to take an interest in religion, of which those around you, perhaps, do not partake. You know, and by happy experience, the comfort of having, with Mary, "chosen that good part which shall not be taken from you." You do not sigh for the

perishing pleasures of a perishing world, for they would not be pleasures to you, if they were spread in rich abundance at your feet; and yet, you are not without your temptations; you are continually led, sometimes by the mistaken desire of benefitting the cause of your divine Master, and more often by a certain softness of disposition and deficiency of moral courage, to yield to others upon points on which your own conscience has no doubts; you carry St. Paul's maxim of "becoming all things to all men," to a most unholy and guilty extreme. When you are in the company of the people of the world, you agree with them, at least, you do not disagree with them, in sentiments which you would blush to avow before the most humble of your Christian friends; nor do you stop here; in actions as well as in words, the same system is pursued; you began, perhaps, by imagining that

this was for the cause of truth, and for the purpose of reconciling others to that of which you knew, experimentally, the value and the blessedness. Deceive yourself so no longer! it is too often merely the natural cowardice of the natural heart shrinking from painful opposition, or the natural craving of the natural mind after this world, and its follies, and its applause. There is not a more dangerous temptation to the Christian than that of desiring to stand well with all men; to possess every man's countenance and approbation. Learn to meet dissatisfaction and contempt, cold looks and disapproving voices, when in the cause of your Lord, without discomfort or dismay; call to your aid His example, His power, His Spirit now, and, above all, strive to realize the day when that single sentence from His lips, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall also the Son of man confess before the

angels of God," will outweigh the crowns of princes, and outvalue all the treasures of the world.

The present are times when, both in public and in private, the true followers of our Lord must show their colours fearlessly and openly. "The enemy is coming in like a flood;" and whether it be in the senate or in society, in the pulpit or in the private intercourse of friends, a decided line must be taken, and the friends of God and of the world must no longer attempt to coalesce. "Who is on the Lord's side, who?" will again be the cry of His people, and none will be recognised now, none will be seen hereafter, who have not been content in the midst of an infidel, scoffing, ungodly generation, to take up the cross of Christ, to bear it openly amid the taunts of enemies and the sneers of friends, to avow themselves its adherents and its advocates, and to be

ready to give up station, character, property, nay, if called upon, even life itself, in its defence.

That we may all know, experimentally, something of this feeling, and evidence it daily and hourly in our public and private conduct, may God of His mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LECTURE VI.

Acts xxiii. 11.

AND THE NIGHT FOLLOWING, THE LORD STOOD BY HIM AND SAID, BE OF GOOD CHEER, PAUL; FOR AS THOU HAST TESTIFIED OF ME IN JERUSALEM, SO MUST THOU BEAR WITNESS ALSO AT ROME.

St. Paul having been liberated from the hands of his infuriate persecutors by the chief captain of the Roman garrison, as we are informed towards the close of the twenty-first chapter, was permitted by him to address from the stairs of the castle of Antonia, the assembled multitude. He commenced immediately with that most interesting account of his miraculous conversion,

upon which, in the early part of this history, we fully commented. He went over in detail all those striking particulars of the great light which shone from heaven upon his path, when journeying to Damascus on his errand of cruelty and persecution; of the divine voice which cried unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" of the supernatural blindness which fell upon him, and his equally supernatural recovery; and, finally, of his entire devotedness to the service of that Saviour to whom he was then so bitterly opposed, but whom he now knew, and loved, and preached, and was content to die for.

All was mute silence throughout that vast assembly, while the apostle dwelt upon these remarkable particulars; but no sooner did he declare that the same Saviour who had called him to the knowledge of Himself, had commissioned him to preach to the Gentiles, than the rage and madness of the people

immediately burst forth. We read that "they gave him audience to that word," but at that single word, which thus presumed to place the despised Gentile upon a level with the favored Jew, "they lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live; and they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air." What a scene was this, how degrading to human nature, how corroborative of all that the Bible tells us of its depravity, and ignorance, and cruelty, and sin! A people who, when the Saviour revealed His offers of mercy in their streets, despised and rejected Him, persecuting Him even to the death, and yet at the very moment they heard that these selfsame offers were now, for the first time, made to the Gentiles, thought death itself too light a punishment for the man who should presume so undistinguishingly to proclaim them.

Such is human nature! There is nothing here peculiarly characteristic of the Jews, or of this remarkable period in their history; it is simply a public exposure of the naked depravity of the natural heart, which is for ever secretly at work with the same malignity and the same hostility to God, alike in all countries and at all times. Is there, for instance, nothing within our own knowledge and observation at all upon a parallel with the exhibition of such feelings and such a disposition! Do we see nothing, even at the present day, which bears a resemblance sufficiently near to this, to demonstrate the same corrupt origin? Alas! a palpable developement of the same feelings, although veiled by the courtesies of civilized society, is by no means uncommon. How often do we find, in the self-righteous professors among yourselves, a feeling, almost of animosity, springing up within you at

the thought of those who have gone more widely astray than you, having been brought to deeper feelings of vital religion than you have been, and finding that peace and acceptance, through the blood of Jesus, which you have never known! That you should, for so many years, have attended regularly and devoutly upon the ordinances of God, and feel nothing of an assured hope of salvation, of a sense of God's pardoning mercy, of a close and vital union, and, springing from this, a near and intimate communion with your Redeemer, while others, almost as widely separated from Him as the Gentiles of old, by their open sins, or long habits of carelessness and worldliness, should be permitted to hear and to receive, in all its peace-giving blessedness, the gospel of the Saviour; this is indeed beyond your comprehension; this has, from the very days of which we speak, been a stumbling-block

to thousands. Yet, brethren, this is simply the fulfilment of our Lord's own prediction to the Pharisees of His time, "The publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before *you;*" that is, the most flagrant sinners shall find pardon and peace before you who are content with "the form of godliness," without seeking to know and to receive its power. Thus, "many who are first shall be last, and the last shall be first;" many a poor, sinning creature, who has denied the Lord who bought him, and has done despite to the Spirit of grace by his secret and open violation of God's will and His commandments, is brought in, at the sound of the gospel trumpet, a weeping penitent, a broken-hearted, contrite believer, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, while many of the children of the kingdom, of those who appeared from early habits and education to be training for its

heavenly courts, shall fall into the snares of the self-righteous and self-sufficient Pharisees, and shall at the last day be cast out; such, awful as it is, is our Lord's own declaration. Pray, brethren, that you may never yourselves mistake the form of godliness for its power; pray that you may learn to rejoice over every sinner that repenteth, over every individual who, through grace, receives the tidings of salvation, although he may have been heretofore most widely separated from God: pray that nothing may be so dear to you as the extension of your Lord's kingdom, even though you may be occasionally humbled, or rather excited to a holy jealousy, by the sight of others who were later in commencing the Christian race than yourselves, and yet are far outstripping you for the prize. Such things are daily occurring in every congregation; how many are there, for instance, even among ourselves, who

gave great promise of a deep, heartfelt, saving interest in the things of God, and who have now "drawn back," we trust, not "unto perdition:" how many, on the other hand, who were once utterly ignorant of the things of God, and who are now seeking, earnestly seeking, a true and life-influencing knowledge of the gospel of our Lord as the one thing needful: and not a few who have really been called out of darkness into the marvellous light of God's word, and having received the Lord Jesus Christ in the love of Him, have no desire so near their hearts as to obey, and to honor, and to glorify Him in their life and conversation.

The chief captain of the Roman soldiery, perceiving that a most extraordinary tumult had arisen in the midst of the apostle's speech, and probably, from not understanding Hebrew, being unable at all to comprehend the motive of it, "commanded

St. Paul to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know wherefore they cried so against him." In the midst of the boasted refinements of the Augustan age, how horrible a barbarity! to subject a prisoner to the punishment of military flogging, to extract, amidst the tortures of his body, the secret feelings of his mind. St. Paul, however, possessed, even under such dreadful circumstances, all that calmness and serenity of soul which the faith of the Christian, and the presence of the Christian's Lord, could alone impart. While they were tying him with thongs to the posts at which this formidable punishment was usually inflicted, he meekly inquired of the centurion who was to preside over the execution of this merciless sentence, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" "Is it lawful"—he

does not say, "Is it merciful?" but simply, "Is it lawful?" If it be, I am content to bear it; the God whom I serve will support me under sufferings which are inflicted for His name's sake. But, if it were not lawful, St. Paul's religion directed him, if possible, to avoid it; he never shrunk from a cross which his divine Master laid upon his onward road, he never stept aside out of that road to take one up: a very different course from theirs who, in after ages, crowded the tribunals, and courted persecution and martyrdom, as if far more anxious to wear the martyr's crown in the courts of joy above, than to fulfil the martyr's duties, toiling and travailing upon earth.

When the centurion heard this inquiry of St. Paul, he felt at once that they had overstepped their legal authority, and were acting in direct opposition to the Sempronian law, which

punished "by the sentence of the people," any, however high their rank, who should presume to beat a Roman citizen. The chief captain, after interrogating the prisoner, and finding that he was not only a freeman of Rome, but a freeman by birth, and, therefore, even more honorable than he himself, who was a freeman only by purchase, ordered the punishment to be stopped, and the apostle's chains to be removed, and contented himself with detaining him within the castle until the Sanhedrim should be assembled on the morrow.

The following morning, accordingly, St. Paul was taken before this highest court of judicature which the Jews possessed, an assembly composed of seventy senators of the greatest consideration in the nation. Anxious at once to declare to them, as he had invariably done to all persons, and on all proper occasions, (2 Cor. i. 12.)

the "testimony of his conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world," St. Paul commenced his address in these words, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." The high priest, Ananias, enraged at the confidence of an innocence which he could not gainsay, and of a calmness which the terrors of the assembled Sanhedrim could not ruffle, "commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" This, my brethren, is again one of those incidents in the life of the apostle upon which the wise and good are divided. Was this speech of the apostle perfectly consistent with the meek

and lowly spirit of Him whose name he bore? or was it an outbreaking of his natural warmth of temper, which the Spirit of God had, indeed, deeply subdued, but not entirely eradicated? We believe that on this occasion it was in strict accordance with the Spirit of his divine Master; and the argument which appears sufficiently conclusive upon the propriety of the apostle's conduct, is this: Our Lord had made all such seasons of trial the subjects of a very peculiar and striking promise, when He said, "Whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." Surely, then, this gracious Saviour would not have permitted St. Paul to have spoken at such a moment from the unsubdued dictates of the natural heart. We cannot, therefore, but consider that St. Paul "spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost," when he said to the

corrupt and guilty Ananias, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall;" and if, as has been said, this high priest was shortly afterwards cut off by a violent death, there is still more reason to believe that this was a solemn denunciation of the divine vengeance, dictated at the moment to this aggrieved and persecuted apostle by God Himself.

Most embarrassing must now have been the situation of St. Paul, violently opposed by his open enemies, and in this instance condemned, as it would appear, by his real friends; for we read that "they that stood by," and it is supposed that this refers to the believing Jews who happened to be present, "said, Revilest thou God's High Priest?" "Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Without entering at

all into the learned disquisitions which have been written to prove that St. Paul really either did not know, or would not, upon principle, acknowledge, that Ananias was the high priest, it is sufficient to receive the apostle's words simply as he uttered them; he did not, at the moment, wist or consider that he was speaking to the ruler of the people; and if he had considered it, speaking, as we believe him to have spoken, under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we imagine that, like Jeremiah of old, (Jer. xx. 9.) he would have possessed no power to decline giving utterance to the malediction with which God had charged him.

In the scene which ensued, we find St. Paul fulfilling, with remarkable success, that most valuable injunction of our blessed and guileless Redeemer, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Upon looking round the assembly, or, as we are told, "earnestly beholding

the council," [St. Paul had perceived that this far-famed Sanhedrim was composed of men possessing the most conflicting religious sentiments, violently opposed to each other, and agreed upon no one point, save that of persecuting, and, if possible, destroying the followers of our Lord. With such an assembly, the path of wisdom was obvious; and accordingly we are told, that perceiving "one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question." This was in no degree deviating from the plain and simple truth; for the resurrection of the dead was one of the most offensive points of Christian doctrine to a Gentile hearer; and the chief accusation made afterwards against St. Paul was, that "one Jesus which was dead, St. Paul affirmed to be

alive." But by thus stating this truth, he dexterously cast the torch of dissension among these intensely prepared and heated elements, and in a moment the whole assembly was in a blaze of personal animosity and theological war. "And there arose a great cry," continues the evangelist; "the scribes that were on the Pharisees' part arose and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God." The tumult increased as rapidly and as fearfully as we can well imagine with such minds and such hearts would inevitably be the case; and the Roman captain, seeing that nothing was to be gained from the deliberation of so incapable and impracticable an assembly, "took Paul by force from among them," and carried him into the castle.

After a day spent amid such remarkable troubles and anxieties, but out

of all which the Lord had delivered him, the harassed and wearied prisoner retired to his bed of straw, to enjoy that peace which an approving God and an approving conscience can alone bestow. Many who lie upon a couch of down well may envy the repose which, under the worst of outward circumstances, is the lot of the righteous. But upon St. Paul, at such a time, so environed by perils, so beset by dangers, his life hanging as it were upon a single thread, the events of the morrow wrapt in impenetrable mystery, the prospect darkened on every side by presages of woe, upon him his merciful Lord was not content to bestow common peace or common consolation. At midnight, therefore, the Lord, even our gracious Saviour and Redeemer Himself, appeared to him as a comforting and encouraging friend. How considerate an act of heavenly mercy, how delightfully realizing the

promise, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." Yes, the Lord Jesus Himself stood beside the prisoner's bed, and casting upon him that look of love, that look which had power of itself to call back the sinning Peter to a sense of his duty, said unto him, "Be of good cheer, Paul;" although in a prison, although surrounded by fierce, and bitter, and powerful enemies, "Be of good cheer, as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." What more could the suffering apostle need to console his heart, to invigorate his resolution? Here was at once an implied approval of all that he had hitherto done in his Master's service, a promise of future employments, and, above all, a present sense of the soul-satisfying love of that Saviour who was dearer to him than a thousand worlds. Well was such a visit purchased by such a day of anxiety

and suffering. Surely no throne on earth was ever honored like that prisoner's cell, no monarch upon earth was ever cheered and comforted like that prisoner's heart! We may lament, brethren, it is difficult not to lament, that such manifestations are no longer granted, that in our troubles and difficulties we have no such encouraging presence of "Him whom having not seen we love;" and yet how much more cause have we rather to rejoice than to repine. "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" that blessed promise is for us and for our children, a promise which never has been, and never shall be, broken to any of the believing followers of our Lord, while time remains. And such a promise of spiritual aid and spiritual presence far outweighs in value any promise of a personal presence which our Lord could have vouchsafed.

Do I, then, at the present moment address any of the real children of God? To you, my Christian brethren, there is no need that I should endeavour to demonstrate the truth, or dilate on the fulfilment of these gracious words. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself;" you have the witness to the fulfilment of this most blessed promise of our Lord "in yourself;" in your own mind, in your own heart, above all, in your own experience. Let the man who would overthrow your faith with argument, reason with you that the fulfilment of such a promise is impossible; let the man who would destroy your faith with ridicule, assure you that the very expectation of its fulfilment is superstition; let the great tempter of your soul suggest to you that it is all delusion, the offspring of a heated imagination, or a weakened mind; you will answer him at once, "Get thee

behind me, Satan," I have the witness in myself, a testimony which no argument can gainsay, no ridicule invalidate, no temptation destroy. I have been in affliction and sorrow, when the consolations of earthly friends were utterly ineffectual to dry the starting tear or to calm the bursting heart, and at that hour there was one who said, "In all your affliction, I am afflicted, and the angel of whose presence" comforted me. Who, while I wept for those who were taken from me, said, "Weep not," they are not dead but sleeping, and those "who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him." I have been in seasons of the most fearful spiritual temptation when I had almost made shipwreck of my hope, and if left to myself should have for ever ruined my immortal soul, but there was one who "with the temptation made a way to escape," who opened up that way to my be-

wildered heart, who by distinctly and perceptibly influencing my mind, my judgment, my affections, my will, guided me into a path of safety, and the snare was broken and I was delivered. I have been upon a sick, and as I believed, a dying bed: I have stood upon the brink of a fathomless eternity, and I have looked, fearfully looked, down upon that place of torment, whither my own sins and iniquities would long since have hurried me, and at that awful hour there was one who stood by me in the watches of the night, and whispered strong consolation: there was one who said, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" I have drawn the sting of death, and robbed the grave of its victory: "Be of good cheer," for I am with you always, and will not desert you amid the swellings of Jordan; my right hand shall sustain you until you have passed the flood,

and have landed in safety in "the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

And are there those who would tell the believer that this is a delusion? that imagination dried this mourner's tears, and delivered the tempted out of temptation, and made a bed of pain a bed of peace? Tell the starving man that imagination can feed him, tell the drowning man that it can rescue him, the dying man that it can heal him, but O, think not to tell the child of God that he could mistake the felt presence, the abiding, comforting, supporting presence of his Lord, for any thing that imagination could invent, or earth or hell could feign. No! you cannot thus deceive the Christian. He has the witness in himself; and if there be a confidence against which neither Satan's snares, nor Satan's power shall prevail, it is this, that

the spiritual presence of his Lord shall be continued to him through good and ill, through health and sickness, through life and death, until it shall be exchanged for His *personal* presence in the kingdom of His glory.

LECTURE VII.

Acts xxiv. 25.

AND AS HE REASONED OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, TEMPERANCE, AND JUDGMENT TO COME, FELIX TREMBLED, AND ANSWERED, GO THY WAY FOR THIS TIME; WHEN I HAVE A CONVENIENT SEASON I WILL CALL FOR THEE.

We resume the history of St. Paul at the close of the twenty-third chapter, where we find that the Jews, having bound themselves together in a confederacy for the destruction of the apostle, it pleased God by His providence to detect and overthrow it. Instead, therefore, of falling a victim to the malignant determination of a blood-thirsty mob, the apostle was at least to enjoy the

semblance of a fair and equitable trial before the Roman governor Felix. For this purpose, having been kept in Herod's judgment hall until his accusers, the chief priests and elders, and their counsel Turtullus, had arrived, on a set day the apostle is brought before the judgment-seat, and the venal orator to whom his destruction had been committed, thus began; "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness." We need not comment upon the high-flown flattery of such an exordium, when addressed to a man whom both Josephus and Tacitus unite in stigmatizing as a monster of cruelty and injustice; it is, alas! no new thing to hear language addressed by flatterers to men of power while living, which the most abject of historians would scorn to apply to them

when dead; but this is the common lot of earthly greatness, never to hear the truth, until truth itself comes too late to profit. This "most noble Felix," who was a murderer and an adulterer, probably never even for a moment imagined the colours in which his own character should descend to posterity; never conceived the idea, that he who was thus daily and elaborately lauded by his surrounding parasites, should, when a few short years had passed, be dismissed by the faithful historian with this single remark: "Felix exercised the royal authority with the spirit of a slave, and indulged himself in every species of cruelty and lust." (Tac. v. 9.) O, for one man in the chambers of princes, to speak the truth, the truth of God, the truth as it is in Jesus, in their ears and to their hearts! It is vain to expect it from those who themselves neither feel its reality nor know its unutterable value; it was vain, there-

fore, to hope it from Turtullus. Without further commentary upon his oratory, then, we will pass at once to the charge which the most corrupt of pleaders brought against the most virtuous of prisoners. "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, who hath also gone about to profane the Temple." The specific charges, therefore, against St. Paul were these: *First*, that he was a rebel against the Roman government, a mover of sedition: *secondly*, that he had been guilty of profaning the Temple: and, *thirdly*, that he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, in fact, a Christian. The two former of these charges the apostle distinctly denies and disproves; to the latter, he honestly and openly pleads guilty. "This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God

of my fathers." This was indeed, as his Master before him had done, "witnessing a good confession." He is not ashamed of the Lord Jesus, even while standing at the tribunal of his enemies: he did not deny his religion, even when branded with the name of heresy. "This I confess unto thee"—this, which is the real cause of the hatred of my enemies, and the animosity with which I am persecuted—this, their heaviest charge, and their most dangerous accusation, I freely confess. My brethren, learn a lesson, I beseech you, from this part of the conduct of the apostle. There are many, probably very many, among you, who are far more deeply influenced by the great truths of the religion of your Lord, than those around you: are you equally willing to confess your sense of the value of these things? When accused of being more earnest in the things of God than your neighbours, what is your reply? Do you shrink

from the accusation, as if piety were a crime? How many are there of men of the world who would rather be considered guilty of any weakness, I had almost said of any wickedness, than of an earnest fervent feeling of love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and of devotedness to His service? They associate the charge with a certain degree of mental imbecility, and they fear that if they plead guilty to it, they shall effectually lose their station amidst the powerful intellects of the day, and cease to be regarded as among the intelligent, the wise, the judicious in their generation. Of all such we can only say, as our Lord has already said, "They love the praise of men more than the praise of God." They are ashamed of Christ in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation: can they imagine that He will confess them when He cometh in His glory, and before the angels of God? If there be, on the contrary,

a sight pleasing to the God and Saviour of our salvation, a sight which the very angels bend from their starry spheres to look into, and which rejoices their pure and perfect hearts more than heaven's own music, it is to behold a devoted follower of their Lord here upon earth stand boldly forward and acknowledge that he is guilty, if it be a crime, of loving the Lord, who died for him, with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; that he will not in silence, under any circumstances or in any society, see His word despised, or hear His name profaned; and that he will rather risk a world's ridicule, or a world's hatred, than one frown from that gracious Being whose love is better than life.

St. Paul having sufficiently cleared himself from the charges of sedition and profaning the Temple, appears to have suffered nothing by the boldness with which he had pleaded guilty to

the charge of what they called heresy. Perhaps at a heathen tribunal, where Judaism and Christianity were alike despised, there was little disposition to give the former a triumph by the persecution of the latter, and thus the very ignorance of the Judge was over-ruled by God to the protection of the prisoner. In continuing the narrative, we are informed that "when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way," that is, having now, since Paul had spoken upon the subject, more knowledge of "that way," as they contemptuously styled the religion of Jesus, than he had previously possessed, he perceived that the prisoner had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds, and, therefore, postponed the further hearing of the case, until the chief captain, who had rescued St. Paul from the hands of the Jews, should arrive to give his version of the act which Tertullus had so grossly misrepresented.

"And after certain days, when Felix came" back to Cesarea "with his wife Drusilla," whom he had probably brought from some distant place, "he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." To enter fully into the circumstances which follow, we must bear in mind that Felix was a Gentile, but Drusilla was a Jewess, the daughter of that Herod who was struck suddenly dead by the righteous judgment of God. Hers was a singular lot: she had been betrothed to Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, king of Comagene; she had been married to Azizus, king of the Emesenes, and having deserted him, she was now living in open adultery with Felix. That such persons should desire to see St. Paul in private, and to hear him "concerning the faith in Christ," appears most remarkable, and would, indeed, be perfectly unintelligible, were it not for the existence of a feeling in the human mind which,

amidst all the indulgence of luxury and all the softnesses of dissipation, will sometimes excite a wish for something more durable and more satisfactory; and although its possessor is prepared to renounce nothing, to improve nothing, to alter nothing, he is yet sometimes found to place himself willingly within the sound of the gospel, either in the hope of finding an anodyne for the gnawings of conscience, or a temporary excitement under the insupportable dullness of a life miscalled a life of pleasure. Whatever may have been the motive, such was the character of the persons who now placed themselves, freely and voluntarily, under the temporary teaching of St. Paul, and most wisely did he improve the precious opportunity. They desired to hear of "the faith in Christ," probably hoping that he would confine himself to the life and doctrines of the Crucified. That he spake of Jesus, that he dwelt long

and powerfully and sweetly upon that, to him, endearing theme, upon His atoning death, His pardoning love, His ever-living intercession, no one who knows the character of the apostle's preaching will presume to question; but that he contented himself with doing so, without attempting to apply these truths to the conscience and the heart, no one who has ever read an epistle of St. Paul will for a moment imagine. We can readily conceive the half attentive, half listless manner in which that guilty couple sat and heard of a Saviour whom they scorned, and a superstition which they despised; we can picture to ourselves the supercilious indifference of Drusilla, who brought up in the Jewish ceremonial, had built her confidence in the proud and vain presumption that she was a daughter of Abraham, and as such should unfailingly sit down with him at last in his Father's kingdom. We can almost see the depraved and

cruel Felix, wrapt in that species of security which the tyrant feels from his own unquestioned and unquestionable authority, self-complacent that he was permitting so vile and low a thing as "Paul the prisoner" to speak thus freely of his despised creed and of his crucified Master, and feeling perfectly assured that no word would be uttered by that prisoner which could disturb the quiet or alarm the conscience of his judge. But in desiring St. Paul to preach to them, they had sought no common teacher, no every day declaimer upon doctrines which he did not feel, no time-serving waiter upon royalty, who would condescend to secure his own safety and his own liberty by speaking "smooth things" to one who had "power to crucify him and power to release him." St. Paul, therefore, for he was not one of those, if such there be, who preach "faith without works," having laid the foundation of

holiness deep in the rock of ages, proceeds to the practical results of the gospel which he taught; and as he never drew his bow at a venture, he, with consummate skill, barbed the arrow for the hearts at which he pointed it. He was speaking to Felix, whose life was as full of injustice and cruelty towards man as of impiety to God, who had indeed lately caused Jonathan the high priest to be put to death for merely reminding him of his duty, and therefore to the unjust judge the apostle boldly reasoned "of *righteousness:*" he was addressing Drusilla, the open and avowed adultress, and therefore to the titled prostitute he reasoned "of *temperance*," (or literally "of *continency:*") he was standing before judges from whom he could expect neither favor nor justice, and he carried his cause up to a higher tribunal, and spake—how awfully and how fearfully to such an audience—"of

judgment to come." That indeed must have been the sting of his discourse, the "judgment to come"—that tribunal at which the present scene would be reversed, where they who now sat aloft in regal state would be the trembling and the hopeless criminals, and where He, for whom the Apostle now was pleading, would be the inexorable Judge: where the present assembly would assuredly meet again, and not in the recesses of a palace from which there was no tongue to tell the world the guilty history of its inmates, but where all that they had done in secret should be proclaimed before assembled worlds; where they who had been hurried into eternity by the dagger of the assassin, or the slower operation of the empty forms of justice, for both of which Felix was sufficiently notorious, should again crowd the judgment-seat, but then, to plead against the unjust judge, and not to suffer

from his cruelty; where Drusilla's injured husband would again stand side by side with her, as they had stood side by side before the altar of God, but now to testify to her broken vows and after life of infamy. Conceive such a subject, handled by such a preacher, and set home to the hearts of such an audience! Doubtless would they most gladly have stopped the daring preacher; most willingly would they have arrested the career of truth; but the very act would have too plainly demonstrated to every stander by, *whose* hearts were wrung, whose souls were writhing beneath conviction from which there was no escape. Long, therefore, did they bear in silent torture the infliction they had courted, till at length, the outward frame gave evidence, too plain to be denied, and too powerful to be concealed, of all that passed within. In the short but emphatic language

of God's own word, "Felix trembled!" he quailed beneath the eye, he shrunk from the voice of his prisoner, every limb shook with uncontrollable emotion. All further forbearance was useless, and he therefore hastily cut short the apostle's speech, and ordered him back to his prison house, hoping to save appearances with others, or to pacify his own conscience by the affected gentleness of the dismissal, and by the false and hollow promise with which he accompanied it, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

We are sometimes led to wonder, while reading this striking and improving incident, whence came it that of these two equally guilty persons, the man, hardened in crime, inured to deeds of blood, and more fitted by nature to endure without emotion the powerful appeal of the apostle, should writhe beneath his preaching, until the

very spectators could mark his pallid countenance and his quaking limbs, while she, the guilty partner of his crimes, could hear all calmly, all unmoved, these bitter and heart-searching truths! The cause of the difference was this, my brethren: Drusilla, the Jewess, had something, however frail and false, in which to seek a refuge; she trusted to the empty form of the religion to which she belonged, and, built up in her self-righteousness, defied the denunciations, even of God Himself; Felix, the profligate, without a refuge either real or imaginary, to which his soul could fly, was more open to conviction, his heart was more exposed to the arrows of divine truth, and for a little moment there appeared in his case a faint glimmering of hope that he might yet be brought to penitence and to God.

Of all the fearful objects upon which the eye of God's ministers can glance, the most fearful, the most affecting, is

this ; to see you, with the light of the gospel shining upon your path, and its truths, its blessed truths, partially at least, received and understood, and yet your lives demonstrating that you are walking in the broad road which will lead you to destruction : when we speak "of righteousness," to feel that there may be some among you, even with all the lip-service of a nominal religion, continuing to act dishonestly, deceitfully, unjustly to your fellow-men : that there may be many among you trusting to your own poor, miserable attempts at righteousness, and, like the Jews of old, "going about to establish your own righteousness, and not submitting yourselves to the righteousness of God," not desiring to be clothed with the spotless and perfect righteousness of your Redeemer : when we speak of "temperance," fearing that even here, and amidst God's professing people, there may be the secret follower of

licentiousness, those who indulge in practices which will not bear the light —the open profligate — the concealed drunkard—the professor of a self-denying religion, and yet, whose morality is the very scorn of the world, and who hopes by a few specious charities or external religious duties, to gloss over deeds which, if revealed, would make life itself a burthen and a curse to him. Do we speak to any such at the present moment? Let God and your own consciences determine: but this we know, that if we do, you are less likely to tremble at the warning, less likely to retire to your chambers to weep and pray for pardon and acceptance, than those who never yet have heard of God's immutable justice, or of a Saviour's love: for that Saviour himself has said, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" . . . . for "ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward,

that ye might believe." (Matt. xxii. 32.) You are, in fact, "gospel hardened;" and while others, not less guilty, will, like Felix, "tremble" at the thought of a "judgment to come," you, like Drusilla, will listen to all that has been said, uninfluenced and unmoved, and retire like Drusilla, to continue a life of unholiness with the empty profession of sanctity; the truths of the gospel in your heads and on your tongues, and a devil of intemperance, or incontinency, or worldliness, within your hearts.

But while we speak thus plainly, as the word of God commands us to speak, of that most fearful of all characters, the ungodly professor of religion, let not the open sinner triumph in the thought, I make no professions of religion, I have my little follies and my weaknesses, like other men, but I do not strive to conceal them beneath the mask of outward sanctity. So far it is

well; you, then, possess no baseless city of refuge, built of the fragments of the sanctuary, which on the last great day shall fall, and grind you to powder. You are not like Drusilla; but would you now contentedly change places with her guilty paramour? Would you wish yourself with Felix? Believe me, there is little, there is nothing, to choose between a hollow acceptance of the truths of revelation, and a total rejection of them;—both are equally ruinous, equally fatal. Religion, it cannot be too often repeated, religion must be every thing, or it is nothing. It is no difficult matter to determine which it is with you. Perhaps you have never advanced upon the right road even as far as Felix, you have never even trembled at God's word;

> "Yours is but half the demon's lot,
> "For you believe, and tremble not!"

You have heard, unmoved, the most awful denunciations against sin, and the

most heart-subduing offers of a Saviour's love. We will not say that you have avowedly and openly rejected them; we will not say that you have turned scornfully away from truths of which in your better moments you acknowledge the reality and power; but then neither did he of whom we have spoken act thus in open defiance of the God who made him; no! that is the lot of few; there are few who have the hardihood to say with them of old "unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" few who thus boldly unfurl the banners of rebellion, and stand in arms against their king. But many, alas! how many who, like Felix, silence every compunctious visiting of conscience, and postpone every serious thought and feeling until some future, some indefinite period, some to-morrow which will never come. Now this is the way, brethren, that you to whom I am more particularly

addressing myself, have continually acted. You have heard the words of the preacher; you know that they are true; others who have never heard them may scoff at all religion, you cannot; if you attempt it, the secret misgiving at your heart contradicts the sneer upon your countenance; you wish you could believe it a delusion; would to God that "the judgment to come" were only a cunningly devised fable, that heaven and hell were the invention of the preacher; but all will not do, you believe in their existence now, you shall not doubt it throughout eternity. Then what remains to enable you to pacify your conscience, and yet to continue the life you lead at present? There is but one way to which Satan invariably prompts you; it is, to postpone, to procrastinate, to say, if not to the preacher, at least to the preacher's truths, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient

season, I will call for thee." Do not harass me at present, go thy way only for this time, but do not return unbidden, I will assuredly call for thee ere long. And do you really intend ever again to call for truths which you now so unceremoniously dismiss? Yes, I firmly believe you do; I firmly believe that the most careless, thoughtless, irreligious person I now address, does most decidedly intend to call for truths which, although he is well contented to live without, he, even he, would shrink from the thought of dying without. But when will you call for them? when will repentance be a more palatable subject, and "righteousness and temperance" more easy duties, and the "judgment to come" a more agreeable topic than at the present moment? You are looking to future years, to days of sickness, to a bed of death, as your "convenient season." Did you ever visit a sick chamber? did you ever

stand by a bed of death? O, if you had, you would not dare to cherish the delusion, that that was a "convenient season" for turning the heart to God, for receiving the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, for preparing for the future judgment. So great a work to be crowded into so small a space! a work which demands every thought of the mind, every feeling of the soul, to be in full and vigorous activity, and you hope to perform it in the few, sad, painful and drowsy, or delirious hours, of mortal sickness! My brethren, may God of His mercy deliver you from so great a delusion! for never did the father of lies cheat a poor soul of its eternity by a more barefaced, palpable, and shallow falsehood, than that with which he is now attempting to satisfy your hearts.

But there are some among you who do more than merely not disbelieve the truths you hear from time to time;

you have really trembled at them; your convictions of sin have been strong and powerful, but there they have stopped. There have been hours when you would give worlds to be among the people of God, but these have soon passed away, and your habits, your acquaintances,—yes, there is the great and appalling difficulty—your acquaintances care not for these things, and you like not to differ from all around you: you imagine that if you are once in earnest in the things of eternity, you must commence by renouncing your friends, and this induces you still to procrastinate; you will say, the "convenient season" to which I look, is by no means so distant, so uncertain a matter: there are some little circumstances in my present lot which will speedily be altered; when such a difficulty is overcome, when such an arrangement is made, when such a relationship is entered

into, when such an event to which I now look forward has taken place, then it is my full determination to seek in earnest the things belonging to my peace, to give up all unholy practices, and really to devote myself to the service of God. It is, perhaps, in vain to tell you, that this is as complete, though not as undisguised a fallacy, as that which we have just exposed. It is vain to tell you that change of circumstances bring with them no change of heart; that if you persist in indifference now, you will be equally indifferent then. I say it is vain to tell you this, because you will probably refuse to learn by any experience but your own: but this, as a Minister of Christ, I am bound to tell you, "whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear," that every offer of salvation, every promise of grace, every assurance of acceptance, with which we are commissioned by

our Lord, from Genesis to Revelation, is limited to the present day, the present hour, the present moment. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." To-day, grace is yours, Christ is yours, heaven is yours; to-morrow, even though willing to seek them, not one may be within your reach; though desirous to pray for them, the Spirit of prayer may have for ever fled; while the only answer to your petitions may be that solemn denial which the word of God has recorded for such hours as these: "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."—"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they

shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

This I am bound to tell you, and I am equally bound to demonstrate to you its truth by the very example before you. For two whole years St. Paul was within the reach of Felix. And was there no "convenient season?" Far from it; "convenient seasons" were continually recurring: we are expressly told, as if to impress the very truth of which I speak, that Felix often, very often, "sent for Paul, and communed with him;" but the time was passed, the day of grace was over, the favorable moment when the heart was softened, and the body trembled, and the "soul melted like wax at the presence of the Lord," had fled, never to return. No impression, that we are told of, ever again was made, no conviction of sin ever again set home upon his conscience; he heard, indeed, repeatedly; but all that we know of him is, that

he was sent in chains to Rome very shortly after his prisoner, and with difficulty escaped an ignominious death. In him, therefore, was fulfilled that seven times quoted prophecy of Isaiah, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Brethren, we would leave the application with yourselves, and would only pray that we may be enabled to add, concerning every individual among you, as our divine Master added, when He quoted the passage to His hearers, "But blessed are *your* eyes, for they see, and *your* ears, for they hear."

LECTURE VIII.

Acts xxvi. 28.

THEN AGRIPPA SAID UNTO PAUL, ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST ME TO BE A CHRISTIAN.

After that most interesting incident which occurred to the apostle, whose life we are reviewing, and which formed the subject of our last remarks, we find that for two whole years he remained a prisoner at Cesarea. It is as needless to comment upon the iniquity of the judge who thus detained a prisoner of whose innocence he was convinced, as it is to speak of his corruption, when we find that he sent for his prisoner the oftener only for the purpose of

affording him the better opportunity of offering a bribe for his escape. We cannot, however, help feeling some little surprise that when Felix left his government, which he did at the end of the two years, he should not have availed himself of so favorable an opportunity for performing an act of cheap and easy virtue, by liberating his prisoner. But this is explained by the evangelist, when he tells us, "Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." The whole course of Felix's administration had been a course of corruption and cruelty; he dreaded, very naturally, the indignation of those whom he had governed, and therefore to court their good opinion, he committed an act of positive injustice against his innocent prisoner. It is astonishing how continually the love and the fear of the world are producing similar effects; and how invariably one dereliction of duty draws others after it in

its train. We feel, perhaps, that we have acted wrongly or inconsistently, and we are then compelled to act still more wrongly and still more inconsistently, to shield us from the effects of our former transgressions. Thus, when the sinner is not brought to cast himself wholly and unreservedly upon the pardoning love of his Redeemer with a broken and a contrite heart, he usually proceeds from one enormity to another, until he find no room for acceptance, "no place for repentance," though like Esau, "he seek it diligently and with tears." Instead, therefore, of our feeling any surprise that to show the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul bound, we are rather tempted to wonder that, to shew them a still greater favor, he did not order Paul for execution; but here the providence of God interfered; God had said to Felix, as he said once before to Satan, "Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life;" the lion can only

go to the length of his chain, and thanks be to God, that chain is held by One, who although he is almighty to destroy, is yet "Almightiest to redeem."

In Cesarea, then, St. Paul was left when Felix departed. This city has already been remarkable in the history we are considering. It was here that Agabus foretold, in the presence of Paul's weeping companions, the fate of him with whose girdle he had bound himself; it was here that the Christian residents had so earnestly "besought him not to go up to Jerusalem," to the bonds and afflictions which awaited him; it was to the disciples of Cesarea that he made that most affecting declaration, "What, mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus;" and it was of these same converts, who so well redeemed their Christian character by their submission

to the will of God in his behalf, that we are told "When he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done." How remarkable a proof of the short-sightedness of human speculations may be drawn from this single incident! these weeping disciples thought that nothing so calamitous could have befallen their beloved teacher or themselves, as St. Paul's determination, in the face of all warnings, to forsake Cesarea, and to proceed to Jerusalem. Yet did this event, which they imagined of all others the most fatal to their hope of ever seeing the beloved apostle again in Cesarea, when overruled by God's providence, insure his residence in that very city for two whole years, a longer period than he would, in all probability, ever voluntarily have thought of. It was, therefore, with the Christians of Cesarea, as it had been with Jacob of old, as it is continually with ourselves; at the mo-

ment we are saying "All these things are against me," our heavenly Father, by the wonderful appointments of His love, and the inscrutable workings of His providence, is bringing light out of darkness, and good out of evil, directing and harmonizing what appears to us the most cross and discordant circumstances, until we are, with shame for our blindness and penitence for our faithlessness, compelled to confess that had the whole arrangement been entrusted to our own management or our own sagacity, we could not have achieved a more prosperous result. For two years, then, did St. Paul, although a prisoner, prosecute his ministry at Cesarea, until Felix, the unjust judge, was superseded by Portius Festus, another Roman governor, as ignorant as Felix of all those circumstances which could alone enable him rightly to decide upon the apostle's case, but apparently more equitable

in his official capacity, and more respectable in his private conduct.

Soon after Festus had arrived at his sovereignty, he received a visit from two persons of considerable rank and importance, Agrippa and Bernice. They were the brother and sister of Drusilla, and the children of that Herod who was punished with death by the just judgment of an offended God. These persons having expressed a great desire to hear the remarkable prisoner, now in the custody of Festus, orders were given that every thing should be prepared for the public examination of St. Paul. Accordingly, says the inspired writer, "on the morrow when Agrippa was come and Bernice with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, Paul was brought forth," and after Festus had opened the proceedings, the apostle was permitted to speak for himself. St. Paul commenced, on this important occasion, by

giving an account of his early life, his rigid Pharisaical habits, his extreme antipathy to the name and people of Christ, all deeply interesting facts to a man possessing such a perfect knowledge of Judaism as Agrippa. From these, he passed on to his unrelenting persecution of Christians, and then to the account of his own wonderful and miraculous conversion to the faith of that Saviour, of whose followers he was, at the very moment of this conversion, in full and blood-thirsty pursuit. He next dwelt upon his own reception of the great truths of Christianity, and the astonishing fact that he, Paul, the persecutor, had "shewed first unto them of Damascus and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." And he concluded by saying, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto

this day, witnessing both to small and great, that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and unto the Gentiles." It is remarkable that in an audience of so hostile a character, the apostle should have been permitted to speak thus plainly and thus at length without any interruption; perhaps it may be accounted for by the fact that he had touched upon no point affecting the consciences of his hearers; had he begun by reasoning upon "righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come," he would probably have found Agrippa and Bernice quite as impatient and intractable as Felix and Drusilla; but he commenced with the historical and doctrinal portion of his subject, and was not interrupted until now, that he was, in all probability, about to apply what had been said to the hearts of his hearers. For we read

that "As he thus spake for himself,"—before, therefore, he had brought his address to a conclusion—Festus, who no doubt, had sat in mute astonishment at the declaration of truths which to him must have been completely unintelligible, could no longer keep silence; he heard the apostle assert that the crucified Nazarene, of whose fate Festus was probably not entirely ignorant, had risen from the dead, and that this was the incredible fact for which he was hazarding his life, and to make one proselyte to which he was compassing sea and land, and sacrificing comfort, character, reputation, all that men most closely cling to, without even the shadow of a recompense or reward. At such a statement Festus could no longer contain himself, but burst forth before the whole assembly with a declaration which, I doubt not, spake the honest conviction of his heart, "Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth

make thee mad." How extremely natural a result for such a mind to arrive at! To behold a man, evidently capable of great things, an educated man, a well-connected man, a talented man, and more than all in the eyes of Festus, a Roman citizen, to behold this man, at one time voluntarily traversing the earth, from city to city, and from country to country, at another, dragged from prison to prison, and all for what purpose, for what advantages? To declare a fact which Festus imagined that no one in his senses could believe, and to induce others to give up every preconceived opinion, and to agree with him in honoring and obeying this dead, but as he asserted, risen and living malefactor. If this were not insanity, Festus was acquainted with no principle sufficiently powerful to induce such a result. And is not this, brethren, precisely the judgment which the world, whether the Gentile or the

nominally Christian world, passes, secretly, upon every man in every age, who really and conscientiously follows the apostle's example? I do not mean that it will actually go the length of asserting that he is mad; this, at the present day, is usually reserved for those whose eccentricities or absurdities fully entitle them to the appellation; but is there not always in the mind of worldly men, when judging of the conduct of the true and consistent followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, a certain indefinite suspicion that all is not right with them, that if they really are not hypocrites, a very difficult fact to establish in the minds of their enemies, they are certainly of very weak and questionable judgment; and while the ungodly portion of the world may exercise too much courtesy to say, "Thou art beside thyself," it fully believes, and does not hesitate to insinuate, that the mind, so deeply in-

terested in the things of God as to prefer eternity to time, the promise of the future to the enjoyment of the present, has lost its balance, and should be no guide to them in seeking the way of everlasting life. The answer of St. Paul was alone sufficient to have convinced his judge of the falsehood of his assertion: "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness. For the king,"—Agrippa, although not a Jew, having been strictly educated in the Jewish religion,—"knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner." How triumphant a reply; I am speaking of facts perfectly notorious, if they be false, let the king himself contradict me, but if true, how can he controvert the deductions which I draw from them? Happy is it for the Christian

that the same truths must be at all times equally sure and incontrovertible; "this thing was not done in a corner!" We preach a Saviour who was crucified before the assembled thousands of Israel, who arose from the dead, and was seen by five hundred witnesses at once. What fact in history shall be believed, if this be doubted? St. Paul continues applying himself now more closely to Agrippa's conscience, as he felt that his understanding was convinced; "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" believest thou those gifted men who declared that Christ must needs "have suffered these things to enter into His glory?" "I know that thou believest," and therefore I know that I have that hold upon thy conscience in declaring these undeniable truths, which I must in vain hope for while addressing Festus. "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" How remark-

able, how astonishing a confession from a king upon his throne to the prisoner at his bar; these truths are so unquestionable that I cannot resist them; would to God that I had, even now, sufficient resolution to exchange my sceptre for the cross, and to follow the Saviour whom Paul preaches.

As in the last lecture, we found it profitable to remark the probable cause of the widely differing effects which the same truths possessed upon Felix and Drusilla, so will it now not be uninteresting to trace the same with regard to Festus and Agrippa. We believe, then, that it may be found, speaking after the fashion of men, to have been occasioned by the fact that Agrippa was thoroughly versed in those scriptures of truth, of which Festus was entirely ignorant. The consequence was, that the very same declarations which were pronounced by the uninformed Festus to be a sufficient proof

of the apostle's insanity, were, in the mind of Agrippa, so convincing, so unanswerable, so deeply influential, that they "almost persuaded him to be a Christian." It is important, most important, to mark this distinction; for it establishes, beyond all question, the superiority of those who are instructed in the great truths of the gospel over those who are in ignorance of them, even where both are alike unconverted to the Lord of the gospel, uninfluenced by the truths which they have received. As a proof of this, observe one of the strongest instances in which it can occur; we are, as ministers of Christ, sent for to attend the last hours of some poor sinner who has sadly and fearfully neglected, while in health, the things belonging to his peace: we address him upon those vital truths in which, at such an hour, without circumlocution or delay, we would urge him to seek a refuge. Alas!

he is as ignorant as Festus of every subject upon which we touch; almost of the terms in which the Bible states them: this is not the hour for explanations or definitions, and before even a partial view can be given him of the great scheme of man's redemption, of the extremity of his need, and of the all-sufficiency of the abundant supply treasured up for him in a Saviour's atoning death and proffered love, the faculties have become still more obtuse, the mind more darkened and confused, and the dying sinner has sunk beyond the sound of human teaching, or the reach of human consolation. Now take the case of one, who, like Agrippa, knows the truth, although he knows it to no hallowed and no saving purpose: behold the minister of Christ at the side of such a sufferer: awful, indescribably awful is his case, but yet, not hopeless. The truths forgotten and neglected in the

days of health are still treasured up in the memory; a word, a hint, a prayer, blessed by the fostering grace of our God, may call them, as it were, into a new existence; may remind the sinner of all he once has known, may send him to the Saviour of whose power he never doubted, may lead him to that God, that (see 2 Cor. v. 20) tenderly beseeching God, the way to whom although he had never trodden, he had never forgotten; and before the man of God has departed, he has seen, in such a case, the icy fountain of that sinner's heart thawed by the rays from the Sun of Righteousness, the tear of penitence gush from his eyes, and the deep and pleading prayer come struggling from his lips; the barrier of indifference for ever broken down, and that hardened but not ignorant unbeliever lying at the foot of the cross. Upon you, then, my brethren, to whom, whether as parents

or instructors, the guardianship of youth is intrusted, I could desire particularly to impress what has now been said, for your encouragement and guidance. You cannot, it is true, convert the heart, but you may largely supply the mind and the memory with scriptural truth, and you may thus be sowing seed which shall produce fruit to the glory of God, long after your heads are laid in the dust, and every other acquirement which you have imparted, shall have passed into merited oblivion.

The reply of the apostle to the declaration of Agrippa is most affecting and most striking. "Then Paul answered and said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." The greatest earnestness of zeal united to the highest delicacy of feeling. He would that his oppressors

enjoyed the privileges, but not the penalties, of the gospel.

That Agrippa should have advanced no farther, that he should have continued the life of immorality in which he was engaged, and have died the "almost Christian" which he lived, is sufficient evidence that human eloquence, and human reasoning, and human feeling, can do nothing, except as instrumentally, to convert one sinner's soul; "not by power, not by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Trusting, then, simply and entirely, to the aid of that divine Spirit, I would now, in conclusion, apply myself to those among you, who are at this hour, in the sight of God, what Agrippa was, at the moment he made the avowal of the text. For have we no "almost Christians" even in a Christian congregation? Alas! is not this rather the peculiar danger and sin of our times? There are few,

very few, of the church-going portion of our community, who would for a moment think of contradicting any of the great truths of our holy religion; yet how many are there of whom, while we may truly say, as St. Paul said of Agrippa, we know that they believe, historically, notionally believe, we do not know, we cannot even in Christian charity profess to hope, that they are fully persuaded to be Christians, to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their all-sufficient and only Saviour, to be justified, sanctified, governed by Him, to desire to live the life of faith on earth, that through His atoning merits, they may live the life of glory in heaven.

Brethren, there is no class of persons for whom a Christian minister feels more deeply than for those among yourselves, who deserve the appellation of "almost Christians." The reason is obvious; he can well enter into all

your feelings, all your difficulties; he once stood where you are standing. Yes! we scruple not to avow that there was a time when we had the same earnest desire to receive the whole truth as it is in Jesus, which many of you, now present, experience, and when we were deterred from it by the same feelings of natural unwillingness and distrust. The fear of the world's ridicule and the world's frown is a most powerful auxiliary to Satan in all our bosoms, and is often for a long period successful in keeping us away from God, and therefore, with many of us at least, loud must be God's warning voice, and heavy upon us God's afflicting hand, before we will come out and be separate, and identify ourselves with the little company who are walking on the straight and narrow road, and seeking for the heavenly inheritance. Let me, then, earnestly entreat you, my beloved brethren, more especially my

younger brethren, to look at this subject, as you will soon desire to have looked at it. The question is not, what portion of this world's advantages, or pleasures, or follies, can you indulge in, and yet secure a blissful eternity. There are no "almost Christians" in heaven; you may waver upon the edge of the line throughout a long, and, it may be, a respectable life, but if death finds you upon the wrong side of that boundary, eternity will find you upon the wrong side of that "great gulf" which man nor angel has ever passed. Be not, then, contented with a religion now, which you will find worse than worthless on the great day of account. I say, worse than worthless, because while a course of open sin destroys both body and soul, a course of half religion does worse; for it equally destroys, but it deceives while it destroys, and at the very moment that you are treading the downward path from which

there will be no return, it fools you into the belief that you are, step by step, ascending to the towers of the celestial city, but avoiding the toil, and the difficulty, and the dangers, with which all but yourself are daily struggling.

There may be temporary peace, but there is, there can be, no safety in such a course as this. Some of you have been long engaged in it, and to what has it brought you? You are not reckoned among the decided and uncompromising people of God, you have never desired to be so, you have prided yourself upon your guilty mediocrity; the people of the world view you as half an enemy, because you do not, you cannot, go all lengths with them; you dread their most sinful practices; you have too much light to have much enjoyment in their unholy pleasures. The people of God view you as but half a friend, a friend whose friendship is far more dangerous to the cause of

their divine Master, than the avowed hostility of His open enemies. And in what manner does God Himself view you? Alas! He sees the whole family of man only in two vast and widely separated companies, as pardoned sinners "in Christ," and as rebel sinners out of Christ! I need not declare to you, in which of these the "almost Christian" has taken his fearful, his appalling stand.

You may, as I have before said, imagine yourself very near the line which divides these widely differing companies; but narrow as that line appears to mortal eye, to the eye of God, it is a chasm infinitely wide, infinitely deep, by human aid utterly impassable. And yet, one earnest, faithful prayer to God from a broken and a contrite heart, one firm and decided resolution, inspired by the Spirit of God, to close with the offers of your Redeemer, to devote all that you are,

and have, and shall be, to His service, and the everlasting arms shall be placed beneath you, and the healing wings of the "Sun of Righteousness" shall wave above your head, and the power of the Omnipotent Spirit shall be exerted in your behalf, and the impassable gulf shall be crossed, and you shall be not only "almost" but "altogether" Christ's. Will you, then, refuse the offer, will you quench the striving Spirit, will you keep back the rising prayer, and decline the dedication of yourself to Him who died for you on the cross, and now so freely invites you to the arms of His mercy?

Then must all the sin, and all the peril, and all the ruin, rest with you, and with you alone. Upon that great and coming day when you will yourself be speechless, every friend, every minister must, as regards yourself, be speechless also; they who have so often pleaded for you at the Throne of Grace

must be silent at the Throne of Glory, while the only voice which will break that silence, in accents to you of unutterable woe, will be the voice of your compassionate but neglected Saviour, who will then repeat, "How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." May God of His infinite mercy grant, for His dear Son's sake, that this be no longer applicable to any soul among you, but that all who hear me this day, may, by the sovereign power of God's grace, become not only almost, but altogether Christians.

LECTURE IX.

Acts xxvii. 31.

PAUL SAID TO THE CENTURION AND TO THE SOLDIERS, EXCEPT THESE ABIDE IN THE SHIP, YE CANNOT BE SAVED.

We have lately contemplated St. Paul in two of the most striking and impressive situations which occur throughout the whole of his eventful history. We are to-day to behold him in one differing most widely from these, and indeed from all his former trials, and yet affording an example of entire confidence in God, of devotedness to the service of his Lord, of holy contempt of death, which leaves far behind it all

the instances of unsanctified courage with which the history of the world is replete, and is not exceeded by any thing to be met with in the history of the church: I allude to the account of his shipwreck and deliverance, narrated in the chapter from which the text is taken. To introduce the subject, it will only be necessary to remind you that St. Paul, finding he had no certainty of obtaining justice at the tribunal of Festus, exercised the right which he enjoyed, in common with every citizen of the Roman empire, of carrying his cause before the highest court of judicature in the kingdom, and appealed unto Cesar. This appeal having once been made, it appears that no lesser authority had the power of reversing it; and accordingly we find Agrippa, at the close of the examination which we considered in the last lecture, acknowledging, "this man might have been set at liberty, if he had not ap-

pealed unto Cesar." Orders were, consequently, given that St. Paul, together with St. Luke, who was his constant companion, and who relates the story, should be conveyed to Rome, for which purpose they were placed under the immediate command of Julius, one of the centurions of Augustus' band; and a vessel having been prepared for their reception, as well as for that of other prisoners bound to the same city, they sailed for the shores of Italy. The weather, which had been prosperous at the commencement of the voyage, soon became overcast; a violent wind arose, before which they were driven in a state of the greatest helplessness and danger for many days. During this period, the sun was obscured, the stars did not give their light, and in those early times when navigation was wholly dependent upon the observation of the heavenly bodies, such a state of things could not but be one of the greatest

uncertainty, if not of imminent peril. For three days all was darkness and confusion, the "tackling of the ship" was cast out, every thing not absolutely essential to their immediate safety was thrown overboard, and still the storm increased, and the helpless vessel was driven before the wind, her timbers creaking, her masts bent before the gale, every human aid so utterly ineffectual, that the inspired historian himself declares, "All hope that we should be saved was then taken away." Probably none who have not witnessed such a scene, and been partakers of its sufferings, can adequately conceive its horrors. To read of such things, to hear of such things, and to be ourselves partakers of them, are widely different; to stand upon the deck of some distressed and lonely vessel while she struggles in convulsive throes with the overpowering elements; to see her one moment at the top of the wave higher

than the highest point of her mast, at the next, in the hollow below, entombed as it were between those mountain waters; to think of the mere plank between us and eternity, and to calculate upon the fearful prospect that each struggle will be her last, and that she cannot long survive the unequal contest; such a scene, united to all that is most distressing to human nature, the shrieks of the timid, the unavailing shouts for succour, the moans of the desponding, the mingled prayers and curses of those who see the hand of God at such an hour, and of those who see it not, may well be imagined to fill even the heart of a Christian with no ordinary sensations. Precisely such a scene was, in this eventful period of his history, witnessed by St. Paul. For many days he appears to have maintained the silence which became the awfulness of his situation, and the momentary prospect of an opening eternity.

At the end of this time, "After long abstinence," probably preparing himself by prayer and fasting for the remarkable office to which the providence of God, and the positive command of his Lord, now called him, he "stood forth in the midst of them," and thus addressed his despairing shipmates: "There stood by me this night, the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cesar; and lo! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, Sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

How strikingly instructive, as well as deeply interesting, is the whole of this incident. Consider only who this was who thus took upon himself, at a moment of such awful interest, to stand forth, and alone direct the efforts and allay the fears of his companions. Not

the captain of the vessel, not the pilot, not the centurion; but among this ship's company of two hundred and seventy souls, a poor obscure prisoner alone is found to stand forth at this solemn hour, to direct, to counsel, to encourage, and, in the end, to command all around him. And think you this was the natural effect of Paul's energy of character, of his courage, and wisdom, and presence of mind? No! it was simply because he was a Christian; because he was the consistent, faithful follower of Him, who said to His people of old, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." It is in times like these that the Christian character shines brightly forth, that its marked superiority is "seen and read of all men," and that the true believer in his God enjoys a calmness and composure, and a self-possession, which the

world would gladly borrow, and of which its vulgar courage is but the poor and imperfect counterfeit.

Let us for a moment examine still more narrowly the remarkable particulars of this astonishing incident. "There stood by me this night, the angel of the Lord." What can separate us from the love of God? What can remove us beyond the reach of His directing and consoling presence? St. Paul, in this tempest-beaten vessel, with neither sun nor star to shine upon him, is not beyond the reach of the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Well did David say, "If I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." In all probability no human being in that vessel could form a conjecture where they were, or whither they were bound during this raging tempest, yet does the angel-minister of God wing at once his unerring way across those

dark waters, and find himself, at God's bidding, by the side of the poor helpless prisoner whom he was sent to comfort and encourage! What a transition for that angel of light, from the radiant courts of the heavenly mansions to the dark hold of this convict ship; yet such is their love and their obedience, that we cannot doubt that he was happier while thus performing the will of his heavenly King, than the happiest child of earth amidst the highest of his unhallowed pleasures. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven!" And is there no comfort to the Christian to be derived from this affecting incident of our history? Surely, brethren, it is replete with encouragement to yourselves. Learn from it, first, this great and blessed truth, that you cannot be in any situation of danger, in any circumstances of despondency, or affliction, or trouble, however deep, however dark, from which the presence of your God

and Saviour can be excluded. Wherever you are, however troubled or oppressed, if you are a believing, praying child of God, there will He visit you, there will He stand by you, there will He deliver you: the hovel of the poor, the cell of the prisoner, the hold of the convict ship, have, doubtless, as often been illumined by the presence of our God, as the mansions of the great, or the palaces of princes. If you can say of Christ, "His I am, and Him I serve," be assured that Christ will say of you under all circumstances, "I am his, and him will I deliver."—In the instance before us, however, the promise was far greater than that of personal deliverance. "Lo! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Not only would the Almighty save His own, but, for his sake, all his companions! How remarkable an instance of the abounding mercy of our God! For the sake of one poor prisoner who believed,

does God deliver a whole ship's company of unbelievers: "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." How little could the heathen crew understand or estimate the cause of their preservation. Yet has this been from the beginning the merciful method of God's dealing with His people. For the sake of those of God's children who were mingled with the Amorites, their destruction was postponed for centuries. For the sake of ten righteous men, God would have spared Sodom. For the sake of Lot, God *did* spare Zoar, which he had condemned to the same judgment as the other cities of the plain. In these cases it is distinctly revealed to us that such was the fact; in how many more cases a similar preservation has been extended, and from a similar cause, eternity only can disclose. But this the Christian will not doubt, that if our heavenly Father, in looking down upon a country

which profanes His Sabbaths, despises His word, neglects Himself, dishonors His Son, can feel any sentiments of love to such a country; if He spare it, while neighbouring nations suffer; if His avenging hand fall lightly there, while it sweep into perdition thousands in other quarters of the globe; we may, from all the analogy of scripture, and from all the attributes of God, humbly believe that it is for the sake of His own purchased and "peculiar people" who dwell in the midst of that sinful and adulterous generation. Yes, brethren, we most firmly believe that the mercy which has been extended to this our country during the late visitation,* is to be attributed, instrumentally, to the prayers, and fastings, and cries of God's people. If this be superstition, then was it either superstition or the grossest mockery to fast, and to cry, and to pray at all; for it is not easy

* The Cholera.

to understand the mind of that man who would perform all these acts, avowedly for the purpose of averting a specific calamity, and yet when that calamity is so averted, considers it superstitious to acknowledge that there was any connection between the cause and the effect; believes that the deliverance was the mere produce of natural agents; and spurns the idea of offering thanksgivings to God for His abundant and undeserved mercy.

St. Paul, having announced to his companions the assurances of safety of which God had made him the honored messenger, concludes by giving his own public attestation to the truth of that which he communicated: "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

Do you desire an exemplification of the faith of the Christian, behold it here! The night before, "all hope that they should be saved was taken away;"

during the night, the angel minister of God reveals this purpose of mercy to His servant; and the following morning, that servant stands boldly forth, although no outward circumstance had changed, although the wind had not lulled and there was no sunbeam on the wave, though the sea still ran mountains high, and the suffering vessel was hourly struggling more and more weakly with her fate, that faithful servant of God stands forth and speaks, not of hope, but of the most perfect and unhesitating certainty; announces the deliverance of every individual around him, with all the calmness of an assured and settled conviction, and concludes with the simple declaration of a faith which not all the terrors of the deep could quell, "For I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Could you, my Christian brethren, but obtain something of the same confidence with regard to the

promises of God in Christ Jesus, the great difficulty of the Christian life would be at an end; once really feel that it will be "even as God has told you," that every promise and every threatening will assuredly be fulfilled, and you will be enabled so to realize the things of eternity, that your faith will become "the substance of things hoped for," and you will no longer prefer to them the things which are seen; earth and heaven, time and eternity, will change places in your affections and minds, and from that hour you will "walk by faith and not by sight," and be as far removed from the daily and hourly trifles and follies which now so deeply engross you, as St. Paul was from the terrors which occupied every other bosom, and from which he had been himself so lately but so perfectly delivered. Notwithstanding his assurance, however, time ran on, day after day, and no abatement of the tempest

appeared, until at length the sailors, who were evidently not in any degree influenced by the declaration or the faith of their prisoner, determined secretly to take to the boat and to save themselves, leaving their companions to their fate. Immediately upon St. Paul knowing this, he again assumed that position in which nothing but the preternatural aid of God could have either placed or sustained him; and authoritatively addressing those to whose command he was intrusted, said to the centurion and soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." "Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off."

This is, to many, the most perplexing portion of the narrative. Had not God given to the apostle all them that sailed with him? Had He not expressly promised, "There shall be no loss of any man's life among you?" and now are we told, "Except these abide in the

ship, ye cannot be saved." How then is the unconditional certainty to be reconciled with this conditional declaration, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved?" To the humble and careful inquirer into divine truth there is no difficulty in this: he sees at once the whole mystery unravelled, in the simple but unquestionable fact, that the same God who ordained the end, ordained the means. That He who had in His undeserved mercy determined to save every soul on board that vessel, had determined to do so through the instrumentality of the shipmen, and therefore had also determined that they should not leave the vessel in the clandestine manner they had purposed, since the ultimate safety of the passengers was made to depend upon the presence of the crew. It is from such incidents as these, in which the dealings of God's providence with men are so mercifully laid open to us,

in which we are permitted to see something of the secret machinery by which they are worked, that we are enabled, yea encouraged, to reason upon the higher and more mysterious dealings of God's grace. The great doctrine of predestination, for instance, how remarkably is it simplified to our minds by the incident before us; how completely does it enable us to answer all the arguments by which men contend against this scriptural attribute of the Most High. They reason thus, that if the election of God be true, men may live as they please, for as their holiness is not required to promote it, so neither can their unholiness subvert it. There is no doubt that such an argument is extremely plausible; probably few minds at one period or another but have been influenced by its fallacy. Whenever it again presents itself to you, call to mind the shipwreck of St. Paul: it will not, indeed, explain what God intended

to be inexplicable, but it will silence many a cavil, and satisfy many a humble and conscientious objection. God had pledged Himself that not a soul in that vessel should be lost, and yet St. Paul, speaking by the inspiration of God, does not hesitate to affirm, that if the shipmen leave the vessel not a soul shall be saved. We reconcile this without the slightest difficulty in the manner you have seen; and is there any greater difficulty in reconciling the doctrine of God's election with the doctrine of the absolute necessity of man's faith and holiness? Assuredly not. We believe that all who are elected to eternal life as the end, are elected to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life and obedience to God's commands as the way to it, so clearly and so fully stated in St. Peter's first epistle: "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto

obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." These conditions are as much and as completely both implied and insured in the Christian's election, as the presence of the mariners was in the predicted safety of the vessel. God himself declared in the latter case, that if the conditions were not complied with, the result could not be accomplished: we hesitate not to assert, in the former case, that if the conditions were to be unfulfilled, the event would be different; and we see nothing contradictory in this: we see nothing here which makes the decisions of the Almighty dependent upon the caprice of man; it is simply saying, that if God's decrees are unfulfilled, they will be unfulfilled, for it is as much a portion of those decrees that God's people should be "a holy priesthood, a peculiar people, zealous of good works" here upon earth, as it is that they should be a happy people, a glorified priesthood in the

kingdom of their God in heaven. And not only so, but the truth of God and the power of God are as much pledged for the one as for the other: He has taken both into His own hands as completely as when He answered for the safety of the vessel, He answered for the presence of the crew. He who has purchased an eternity of joy for His people, has ascended upon high to bestow every good and necessary and perfect gift to His people; their faith, their repentance, their holiness, are all of His procuring, and of His applying; they can now say from the bottom of their hearts, with Isaiah of old, "Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us, for Thou hast wrought all our works in us:" they will, hereafter, with the glorified saints above, cast their crowns in deepest abasement at His feet, and say, "Thou and Thou alone art worthy, for Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." Can this view, this plain and scriptural

view, lead you to licentiousness, to unholiness, to sin, or even to supineness or indifference to any of the practical duties of godliness? No! if the deepest obligations can produce gratitude, if the strongest feelings of gratitude can insure love and obedience, then have we here the most powerful persuasive to holiness that ever influenced the heart of man. No hell would be needed for that man who could hate, and defy, and disobey, wilfully and habitually disobey, a Being from whom he believed he had received such inestimable mercies; the presence of his own accusing conscience would be sufficient punishment. While, then, my Christian brethren, you believe, as you are bound to believe, that all your holiness, as well as all your happiness, is of God, and while you "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" at prospects of future blessedness, which no tongue can tell

and no heart conceive, labour, pray, strive, agonize to " add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

LECTURE X.

Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

AND PAUL DWELT TWO WHOLE YEARS IN HIS OWN HIRED HOUSE, AND RECEIVED ALL THAT CAME IN UNTO HIM, PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND TEACHING THOSE THINGS WHICH CONCERN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH ALL CONFIDENCE, NO MAN FORBIDDING HIM.

We left the apostle at the close of the last lecture, when by God's providence, after the horrors of the shipwreck, he, in company with all those who sailed with him, and whom God had given him, "escaped safe to land." The island upon which they were cast was called Melita, now Malta, in the Mediterranean; and no sooner had St. Paul landed there,

than it pleased God, by a remarkable instance of His providential regard to His servant, to bring him into that degree of notice with the barbarous inhabitants of the island, which should insure their subsequent attention to the truths he might deliver to them. When all had got safe to land, and were engaged in protecting themselves against the rain and cold to which they were still exposed, St. Paul was occupied with the lowest of the company in providing fuel for the fire which they had kindled; and we are told that "when he had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them upon the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." How remarkable it is, that in the most unenlightened

minds, there is still a general sense of the necessity of retribution; a general expectation, although frequently an erroneous one, that even in this world, the wicked shall not go unpunished. Thus we find that while in our Lord's time even the enlightened Jews could not witness the fall of the tower of Siloam, without feeling convinced that they, upon whom it fell, were sinners above all the Galileans; in the case before us, the barbarous Maltese could not behold a viper fasten upon the hand of a poor, shipwrecked stranger, without at once pronouncing him to be a murderer. It is in vain that our Lord corrected this erroneous conclusion in the former instance by His precept, and in the latter by His providence: men are still prone to recognize in great afflictions the invariable accompaniments of great delinquencies, forgetting that as a general rule, the word of God has declared that, in this

world, "All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not." However this general rule of God's providence may be occasionally broken, as it unquestionably is, to convince men that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth in the kingdoms of the earth, it is usually maintained. Our heavenly Father maketh His sun to shine and His rain to fall alike on all quarters of His field, that the tares and the corn may grow together undisturbed and often undistinguished until the harvest; and not till the hour that the sickle is put in, not till the day that the doors of the everlasting garners shall be opened, will this general rule be dispensed with, or the spiritual state of every man before God be fully revealed and for ever ratified. The humble and confiding child of God knows that it is

so, and delights to know it—he hopes for nothing, he fears nothing, he expects nothing here below, and is even willing to subscribe to the opinion of the apostle, that "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." He, therefore, waits in the full assurance of hope, for the day when all things shall be adjusted, when every cross providence shall be set straight, when the servants of God, who have laboured through evil report and good report in this world, and have received for their compensation, as their Lord before them, "the reproaches of many people," shall be acknowledged, and rewarded, and crowned, in that "new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," and whence His enemies shall be banished with an everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord and of His glory. Brethren, live for that day and for that hour! If even the heathen painter could think no

labour too great, no pains too incessant, because he "painted for eternity," will you be satisfied to live for time? With such a day before you, will you idle and trifle away your years, your life, your soul? Will you not rather say, while I will "judge nothing before the time," but leave all judgment to the Lord, I will strive with others, I will, by God's grace, labour myself to be approved of the Lord on that day: I will enter upon no business, I will form no connections, I will engage in no pursuits which shall hang heavy on my soul, when summoned to the tribunal of my God.

In the case before us, it pleased God, for the furtherance of the gospel and of His own great name among this barbarous people, to deviate from the common course of His providence, and to fulfil that express promise made to the immediate followers of our Lord, "They shall take up serpents,

and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them:" for we are told that St. Paul "shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm." "Howbeit, they looked, when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly; but after they had looked a great while and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a God." We may truly say that, in this case, the last error was worse than the first; for while we believe that few people could think more disparagingly of the apostle than he thought of himself, we are sure that nothing could be more painful to his heart than the idea that he should be considered by his fellow men as other than a poor, guilty, self-ruined sinner, pardoned by the grace of his divine Master, and labouring most imperfectly to honor and glorify that Master in return.

That mankind are the same in all ages and in all places, in the most

barbarous and the most civilized, daily events around us proclaim as loudly as this little incident before us. The same voices which applaud to the very echo the hero of to-day, are to-morrow rending the skies with yells of detestation and abhorrence; the same man, with the same proportion of good or evil, alike the object of their worthless applause, and of their senseless execrations! If there be a lesson plainly taught us by any of the events of life, surely this should proclaim, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of." Endeavour to attain to something of that truly scriptural and comfortable feeling which enabled St. Paul to be alike indifferent to the opinion which, at one moment, proscribed him as a murderer, and in the next, enrolled him among the Gods: an indifference which he himself so plainly and so forcibly expressed, when he said, "With

me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self; but He that judgeth me is the Lord." There is, assuredly, no bar more insuperable to our real progress in vital religion than an overweening respect for the opinion of our fellow sinners. Many there are who never make an effort to "follow the Lord fully," from the dread of this imaginary foe; many more, who having entered upon the scriptural course, like him who "began to build, and was not able to finish," advance for a little season with the people of God, and, unable to bear the adverse opinions of those around them, "turn back again to folly," daring rather to brave the eternal anger of an offended and insulted God, than the momentary contempt of the poor perishing beings by whom they are surrounded.

Many were the miracles which St. Paul performed during his residence at Malta; and although in the very succinct account of the evangelist, nothing is said of his having preached the gospel there, we do not require to be told, that he who could not spend one night in a prison without delivering the blessed message with which he was intrusted, could not have remained three months in Malta without delivering that same message to very many of its ignorant and barbarous inhabitants. To the seed then sown, may doubtless be traced eighteen centuries of Christianity in that island, disgraced although it has now long been by the corruptions with which an apostate church has there, as in many other of the fairest fields of the Lord's vineyard, deformed it.

After St. Paul's departure from Malta, he proceeded with a prosperous course towards Rome, many of the Christians

of which city, when they heard of his approach, travelled a distance of fifty miles from the capital to welcome and to encourage him. The effect of this act of Christian kindness is thus briefly but touchingly recorded by the evangelist: "When the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage." He attributed their friendship to the right source, the tender compassion of his God; and bold as he was and indifferent to human opposition, he was clearly not indifferent to human love and human sympathy; the very sight of those, who, although unknown to him in the flesh, loved him for the sake of their common Master, and had put themselves to no trifling inconvenience to testify this love, comforted and encouraged his heart, and sent him on his way rejoicing. It is delightful from such instances as these to see,

that even this great apostle now when drawing near to the end of his course, was still glad to avail himself of the same aids, and to cling to the same human succours, as we ourselves. Although, like God's people of old, he doubtless "encouraged himself in the Lord his God," although he possessed His rod and His staff to comfort him, he was still not above the support of a human arm, the ministering kindness of kindred spirits. We may imagine that we exalt the character of the Christian, and increase the glory of God, by representing it as one of the proofs of exalted piety and high spirituality of mind, to find God all-sufficient for us, and to live, and to desire to live, above the reach of human love, or the need of human sympathy: but this is to be "wise above what is written," and to substitute our own imaginations for the revealed will of our God. He who made us, made us weak, suffering,

dependent creatures, dependent not merely upon Himself, but upon each other, for much of our peace, much of our comfort, much of our consolation, in traversing this vale of tears; and, doubtless, He made us thus, that we might educate that peculiar faculty of our souls in time, which should form the well-spring of all our joys throughout eternity. I need not say that that faculty is the faculty of loving and being loved. "Beloved," says St. John, "let us love one another; for love is of God: and every one that loveth, is born of God and knoweth God; He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." How merciful an arrangement, that that which of all things tends the most to brighten the path and to gladden the heart of the Christian, should come to us with all the obligation of a command, as well as with all the sanction of a promise. But, my brethren, here we must pause: were we to ex-

patiate upon this great duty, as St. John expatiates almost throughout a whole epistle, we should, I fear, carry with us comparatively few of the hearts of those who hear us; for if there be any one qualification in which the Christianity of our days differs more than in another, and God knows it differs in very many from the Christianity of which we are speaking, it appears to be in this—the deficiency of Christian love. There is much knowledge, there is, we trust, in many, no lack of faith, but there is in all—yes, we fear we must say, in all—a want of the genuine scriptural feeling, so often recommended by our divine Master, so peculiarly valued by the apostle of whom I speak, the universal spirit of love; love to the members of the redeemed family of our Lord, simply because they are the members of His family, without any reference to their own individual recommendations or at-

tractions; acknowledging it a sufficient recommendation that they "love the Lord Jesus in sincerity;" feeling it a sufficient attraction that they have His blessed image impressed upon them, and possess something "of the mind which was in Christ Jesus." Is there not too much of truth in this allegation? Try yourself for a moment by some of the many rules in God's own word. For instance, it is a command of that word to "bear one another's burdens, and so to fulfil the law of Christ." Is it your constant aim and effort to fulfil it thus? It is a declaration of that word, speaking of the household of faith, that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Is this realized amongst us every day? Alas! not only do we know but little, experimentally, of this blessed duty, but many, perhaps, are scarcely aware that it is a duty, and that these are rules of Christian love

laid down by the great Author of Christian love Himself. There is, in fact, a hardness about our Christianity which most painfully distinguishes it from the Christianity of the apostles. We read of the Ephesian and Tyrian converts accompanying St. Paul to the sea shore, and parting from him there with tears and prayers: we read of these Christians of Rome, who had never in their lives seen the apostle, travelling fifty miles to solace and comfort him, although a reputed malefactor, and in bonds; and we satisfy ourselves that the difference of time and place is quite sufficient to account for the absence of all this feeling from our hearts, which formed so prominent, so powerfully influential a motive in their. But, brethren, the real spirit of Christianity must be throughout eternity unchanged; like its divine and blessed Author, it is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." If we are, indeed, the followers

of Him whose name is Love, our conduct towards every member of His redeemed family will be marked by love; we shall, as the beloved apostle expresses it, "not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth:" there will be an universal spirit of affection and tenderness spreading itself through all our intercourse with our fellow men, and realizing, darkly and imperfectly indeed, but still truly and practically, something of that blessed feeling which forms the light, and life, and glory, of the many mansions in our Father's house.

St. Paul, after his arrival at Rome, having made his usual effort, in the first place, for the salvation of his own countrymen, and as usual, having found it vain, turned to the Gentiles, and during two whole years, in which he was a prisoner, "received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which

concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him." It was thus that God overruled his imprisonment "for the furtherance of the gospel, so that his bonds in Christ were manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by his bonds, were much more bold to speak the word without fear." Even in the palace of Nero, the most noxious atmosphere, as we should have concluded, for the growth of divine truth, his bonds were manifest, the Lord Jesus was preached, and more than this, was received to the saving of many souls; for we find the apostle writing to his Philippian converts, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cesar's household." Not the residents of Rome only, but all the Church of Christ, and we ourselves, in this distant, and, at that period, dark and barbarous

corner of the globe, have abundant reason to bless God for the dispensation which, during the most matured period of St. Paul's Christian life and experience, detained him a close prisoner in the imperial city. Had he, to the end of his course, been at large, occupied, as he had long been, "in labours most abundant," he would, humanly speaking, never have found time or opportunity to pen those admirable epistles which have been in all ages, and shall be to the end of time, among the most blessed portion of the Church's inheritance upon earth. It was from within the walls of a prison, probably chained hand to hand to the soldier who kept him, that St. Paul indited those inestimable productions, the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews; epistles, evidencing perhaps more than any other, the Christian love with which his heart overflowed, the Christian experience with which his

soul was imbued, and the energy and zeal for the spread of the gospel and glory of his divine Master, which could enable him to say that his only hope and expectation were, that "Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or by death." After two years' imprisonment he was again liberated, and again rejoiced "to spend and be spent" for the glory of God, "the love of Christ constraining him." At this period he revisited all the churches which he had planted, and then returned to Rome, to finish his glorious work in that important but profligate city. It was there, as we are informed by St. Chrysostom, that preaching the blessed truths of that gospel which is freely offered to the very worst of sinners, his discourse was blessed to the conversion of one of the concubines of the cruel and profligate Nero. By command of the tyrant, he was immediately committed to prison, and shortly

after liberated by the sword of the executioner, being beheaded for the testimony of Jesus.

Most deeply interesting would it have been, could we have heard every minute particular of the passage from time into eternity of one, in the incidents of whose instructive history we have so much delighted. How precious to the Christian would have been every syllable uttered upon that scaffold, every word which fell upon the regardless ear, or was drowned amidst the execrations of the Roman soldiery. Doubtless God has withheld this, entirely in mercy to our weakness. There has always been too strong an inclination in the heart of fallen man to deify his fellow sinners; and if, notwithstanding the total silence of scripture upon these interesting points, every saint whose name has descended to us, has been the object of superstitious adoration, what would have been the effect, had they been all so strongly

recommended to the natural heart, and so entirely the objects of our love, as they most assuredly would have been, if such minute particulars as we desire had been bequeathed to us. It is, however, our blessing and our privilege that we have a remarkable testimony to the dying experience of St. Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, written during the last imprisonment which preceded his martyrdom. We there find him writing from within the walls of a dungeon in this encouraging and glowing language: "I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." "For," he continues, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which

the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Blessed, most blessed testimony, that the truths which it had been the one great object of his life to promulgate, were sufficiently powerful to sustain and comfort him in death. His was, indeed, the "hope which maketh not ashamed;" no fear, no doubt, no uncertainty, had place in his firm and tranquil breast at that dying hour. While in the midst of active usefulness, he had, doubtless, all the conflict and the struggle, and even all the infirmities and misgivings, which God in mercy strews so thickly upon the path even of his dearest children. He had a "thorn in the flesh," a trial incessant and acute, lest he "should be exalted above measure through the abundance" of his glorious privileges; he had the transitory fear that "when he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway," that he might pray the more fervently, and strive the

more zealously to keep "under his body, and bring it into subjection." But all these had now for ever passed away, the thorn no longer rankled in the flesh, the faithless misgiving (if he had ever felt one) tortured him no more. He had always believed, but he was now "persuaded," that all would be well: he stood upon the brink of the grave calm and unmoved, like the conqueror in the capitol, waiting for the crown to be placed upon his brow. The prison and the chains, the axe and the scaffold, were all forgotten; the valley of the shadow of death itself was overlooked, and in the words which I have read to you, the aged soldier of Christ almost appears, before he had put off his armour and laid down the weapons of his warfare, to have commenced the conqueror's song, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the

Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." My Christian brethren, less of triumph, less of ecstacy may be reserved for you, but, if you are with him of whom I speak, fighting in the ranks of the same Saviour, not less of security and peace. While "the captain of the Lord's host" stands side by side with the boldest champion of the faith, giving him all his boldness, and then blessing and rewarding the very grace which he bestows, He also, the compassionate Redeemer, stands equally side by side with the weakest infant in that "holy army," ready, when his strength fails him, to lift him up in His arms, and to bear him aloft above the danger and din of the battle, and in the hour of nature's darkest peril, to make even him, the weakest and the feeblest, "more than conqueror." Live then, brethren, more and more in the love of that Saviour, labour more and more to glorify Him by every action

of your lives, and you shall assuredly, by His strength, be now among the number of those who shall overcome, and, by His free grace and mercy, be hereafter among that blessed company who shall sit down with Him upon His throne, even as He also has overcome, and has set down on His Father's throne, at God's right hand for evermore.

LECTURE XI.

ROMANS vii. 19.

FOR THE GOOD THAT I WOULD, I DO NOT; BUT THE EVIL WHICH I WOULD NOT, THAT I DO.

HAVING now concluded the history of St. Paul, every portion of which has proclaimed him to be the very chief of the apostles, eminent alike in all spiritual gifts and Christian graces, let us on the present occasion behold him, not on the high eminence upon which he stands as the great apostle of the Gentiles, but in the lowly walk of the Christian's private life. Let us follow him to his home, and to his closet; let us see him upon his knees before God

in private, and hear him pouring forth the humiliating confessions, and acknowledging the internal conflicts and struggles, which prove that, with all his high and holy privileges, he was still, like ourselves, the feeble, fallen, sinning child of sinful parents.

The seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans will present the apostle to us precisely in the situation to which I have referred, and will, by God's grace, minister greatly to the comfort, and encouragement, and edification, of the believer, by convincing him that there is no difficulty under which he labours, no conflict in which he engages, that was not fully understood and experimentally known by St. Paul. For in this chapter we find recorded at greater length than in any other part of sacred writ, the struggle which is perpetually maintained in the renewed heart of every child of God, between the new principle of good which

has been implanted by the Spirit of God, and the old principle of evil which has been derived from our first and sinning parent, Adam.

St. Paul, having dwelt upon this painful but deeply interesting subject through many verses, sums up the matter in these words: "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then, a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members."

In speaking of this passage as developing the Christian experience of St. Paul, I am aware that I am differing from some very learned and excellent

commentators, who maintain that in these verses the apostle has no intention of referring to himself; that so far from St. Paul here speaking in his own person, he does not speak in the person of any regenerate or renewed Christian; that although he expresses himself, in the passage before us, in the first person, he is either putting himself in the imaginary position of the unregenerate man, or else speaking of himself, and of his feelings as they existed when he was the unconverted Pharisee, and not as he was when writing this epistle, the enlightened and holy apostle of the Lord Jesus. If this opinion be true, and if in the text and its context the writer be speaking in the person of Saul the unconverted, and not of Paul the apostle of the Lord, then, indeed, we grant that the passage is wholly inapplicable to the purpose for which we have this day produced it. It can no longer be sup-

posed to afford scriptural views of the Christian experience of the believer, or to comfort him under spiritual trials by the example of the children of God; it must, therefore, be left as a remarkable anomaly in the word of God, inexplicable and unintelligible; since, as we shall endeavour to demonstrate, if it speak of the natural man, it attributes feelings to the natural heart, and sentiments to the natural mind, differing most widely from all that are elsewhere attributed to them in the word of God, and established by our own experience.

We proceed to prove this from the passage before us. We find the writer, then, in the fifteenth verse, thus expressing himself: "That which I do, I allow not;" meaning, "When I oppose the commands of God by my conduct, I feel that I am acting wrongly, and I allow it not; even while I do it, I confess that I ought not to do it." Now so far we believe the experience before

us might possibly be that of an unconverted man; we believe that there are many living in the world, and entirely of the world, who could unite thus far. We have heard men of the world make very similar acknowledgments, and appear almost to think that the confession itself was sufficient to satisfy God for the dereliction confessed. We know that even a Heathen poet made a very similar confession, when he declared, "I see better things and approve them, but I follow the worse." When the apostle concludes the verse by saying, "But what I *hate*, that do I," declaring that he actually abhorred those sins into which he was occasionally and most unwillingly beguiled, then, indeed, we begin to doubt whether the unconverted man of the present day, or the Heathen of old, could accompany him in the confession. But when, again, upon proceeding still further, to the twenty-second verse, we

find him declaring, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man," all doubt immediately vanishes, and we are convinced that no unconverted man since the world began, however amiable, however averse from the grosser sins, has been enabled to speak or to feel thus. Brethren, I am satisfied to refer the argument to your own consciences and your own experience. Were you able to "delight in the law of God" while in the state in which you were by nature? Could you say, while in this state, or, if you are still in this state, can you say, that when you read our Lord's spiritual explanation of the law of God, that an angry word is murder, that an unchaste look is adultery, that a covetous desire is theft, you acknowledge, and delight to acknowledge, or as the original word may be translated, feel a real pleasure or complacency in so strict, so holy a law as this, for the guide and direction of

your life? Is there any portion of this law of holiness, of self-denial, of purity, of hatred to sin, of love to the Redeemer, that thus really delights you, if you are still unrenewed in the spirit of your mind, or that did delight you, before your hearts were changed by the Spirit of God? The question itself almost involves a contradiction and an absurdity; for if these things were really delightful to your natural heart, then would all change have been unnecessary; then would your hearts have been, by nature, all that God could have desired, and all that the Spirit of God could wish to make them; and instead of that total change of heart and affections with which, from one end to the other, the word of God is replete, it is evident that the great work of the Spirit of God would be, not to change, but to preserve from change, such spiritual and rightly judging hearts, to maintain them precisely in the con-

dition in which they were by nature formed; and as you already delighted in God's perfect law, merely to keep alive within your bosom so pure, so holy, so desirable a sentiment. I need not tell the Bible Christian, who knows that he "must be born again," or the Church of England Christian, whose Articles have told him that he is "very far gone from original righteousness"—I need not tell such persons that the reverse of all this is the fact. No, brethren, you must blot out for ever from the word of God that declaration which says that the natural heart is "desperately wicked," and blot out from the memories of the children of God the feelings, and pursuits, and actions of their own lives, before you can teach them to believe that the apostle spake in the person of the unconverted, when he said that he "delighted in the law of God after the inward man." I will, therefore, only add, to what appears to

me so conclusive, the further testimony of St. Paul in the closing verse of the chapter, when he says, "So then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin." The expression, "I myself," is so different from any expression which the apostle ever uses when speaking, as we allow he often does, in the person of another, that I think it might be permitted to determine the whole matter, and to prove that throughout this passage he speaks of himself as he then was, a truly converted and regenerate person, and yet continually subjected to the struggle for ever going forward in the renewed heart between the two opposing principles of good and evil.

Believing, then, that the verses before us truly describe the spiritual conflicts of the real children of God, we have in them the most unquestionable evidence that Christian perfection, although it is to be continually longed for, prayed

for, striven for, during the whole course of our lives, is not, cannot be, actually attained, until we shall join "the spirits of just men made perfect in the kingdom of our Father." The sanctification of the believer is, in fact, a constantly progressive work, never perfected here on earth, but daily and hourly growing, advancing, maturing, by the work of God's good Spirit in the heart throughout every mile of the Christian's pilgrimage. This will explain to you one of the great distinctions between our justification and our sanctification. Our justification proceeds simply from our being "in Christ," "not having our own righteousness," but having "the righteousness which is of God by faith," the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer placed upon us, and for his sake, being "*accounted* righteous"* before God. While, on the other hand, our sanctification proceeds from the

* See Eleventh Article of our Church.

work of the Spirit of God within our hearts, enkindling in them holy affections and desires, and leading us onward to delight in God's law, and to strive after an increasing conformity to His will and His ways. The consequence of this distinction is, that our justification is complete and entire at once, so complete and so entire that no after deeds of holiness can make any addition to it: our sanctification is, on the contrary, most incomplete at the commencement of the Christian course, and never perfected until, as we have seen, it is perfected amid the perfections of our Father's house. Archbishop Leighton has so beautiful a passage on this subject, that I shall introduce it here as a good preparative to our further consideration of the subject before us. "The sun," says this eminently holy man, as well as admirable divine, "the sun is perfectly luminous, but the moon is but half enlightened; so the believer

is perfectly justified, but sanctified only in part. His one half, his flesh, is dark; and as the partial illumination is the reason of so many changes in the moon to which the sun is not subject at all, so the imperfection of a Christian's holiness is the cause of so many waxings and wanings, and of the great inequality in his performances; whereas, in the meanwhile, his justification remains constantly like itself: *this* is imparted, *that* is inherent."

We proceed to consider the lesson to be derived to the believer from the remarkable state of mind of which the apostle has bequeathed us so instructive an outline. We learn from it, that even in the most advanced state of the Christian here on earth, there are still the remains of indwelling corruption, endeavouring to turn him back, and to draw him aside from the path of duty; tempting him to neglect the good which he is conscious he ought to

perform, and to commit the evil which he is as conscious he ought to avoid. Every day, and almost every hour of every day, is this struggle going forward, some unholy desire, or improper temper, or hasty or uncharitable expression, convincing him how much there is yet to uproot, and to subdue, and to cast out: some higher degree of spiritual light and life presented to him in the word of God, some faint glimpse, some partial feelings of those heights of heavenly-mindedness to which he has not yet ascended wrought in him by the Spirit, and by their transitoriness convincing him how much there is yet to attain and to seek after; and by their loveliness leading him to strive more ardently than ever for their attainment. Even in his holiest and happiest moments he is conscious of this humiliating truth, and the word of God is seldom heard, and the house of God seldom entered, and the day of God

seldom passed, without adding fresh proofs, mortifying, humbling proofs, that he has "not yet attained, neither is already perfect." Thus there is a perpetual struggle between the principles of good and evil going forward within his heart; sometimes a momentary triumph elevates his hopes, and then again a disgraceful defeat casts him as low as ever in the dust. Yet, blessed be God, though a painful and often a discouraging warfare, it is not an uncertain one; the word of our great Leader is pledged to us that He will "bruise Satan under our feet shortly;" still are there many battles to be fought, and many victories achieved, before the word of our God shall be fully and for ever verified. We would, then, inquire, my brethren, are you conscious of any thing of the nature of these conflicts going forward in your own hearts? If you are not, it must proceed from one or other of these causes: you must

either have attained to such lofty degrees of Christian perfection as to be above their reach, to dwell in so high and so pure an atmosphere, that these things cannot enter; or, you must be so unconscious of the power of any spiritual influence, that with you there is no conflict, because the principle of evil reigns unopposed and undisturbed within your bosom. The first of these St. Paul distinctly disavows for himself, when he says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." We cannot, therefore, suppose that many among you are in the enjoyment of that which was not vouchsafed even to this chief of the apostles. While, on the other hand, we would willingly hope that none here present can plead guilty to the second: for if there be an appalling state in which to meet the eye of a holy, and heart-searching, and jealous God, it is that of the careless, thoughtless sinner going

on recklessly and contentedly in a course of God-forgetting indifference, pleased with every trifle, delighted with every enjoyment of earth, but possessing no one desire after holiness, and no one anxiety to ascertain his state before that God who shall "come to be his Judge."

To neither of these classes do I now address myself, because my subject leads me to a third and very different order among you: I address myself to you who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious;" who have been led to hate, and, as far as possible, to forsake your sins; and who have no wish so near your hearts as to approve yourselves before God, and to honor your high calling in Christ Jesus by a holy and consistent walk and conversation. It is to you a pain and a grief which you can ill express, that there is still so much of daily dereliction of duty, so much of constant short coming and continual defect in every part of your Christian cha-

racter. You have, indeed, been taught by God's Holy Spirit to delight in the law of God in the inward man, and you are unceasingly desirous to honor and obey that law as a rule of life, though you look to it neither for pardon nor acceptance: but then the other law in your members is waging perpetual warfare against the law of your mind, and by its frequent triumphs over your good intentions and holy resolutions, "bringing you into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members." The example, then, of the apostle will administer comfort, scriptural comfort, to your souls. Are you thus perpetually harassed by sins of infirmity? The greatest apostle, the holiest saint, who ever lived, acknowledges the same. Do you find that the more assiduously and the more prayerfully you strive after perfection, the more conscious you are of imperfection: I do not say, the more imperfect you are, but the more

conscious you are of the imperfection, which, although decreasing, still remains? The great apostle of the Gentiles confesses that he felt precisely the same. Does your progress in holiness fall far, very far, short of your desire after holiness? so did St. Paul's: "to will was present with him, but how to perform that which was good he found not." Let the reflection, then, that one of the most holy, best beloved, and most honored servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, experienced all that you experience, and yet was enabled, by divine grace, to fight the good fight and to attain the crown, encourage you in the same holy course, and send you on your way comforted and rejoicing. But, brethren, be careful that none among you appropriate a comfort to which you are in no degree entitled. It is possible to extract poison from the sweetest flowers which grow in the garden of God. It is possible for the heart to

be so blind as to say, even while indulging in wilful sin, but yet feeling some painful misgivings of which few are entirely destitute, 'This is the conflict of the apostle; this is good evidence that I am a child of God: "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak;" I would do good, but evil is present with me, and I may hope that a merciful God will not inquire too strictly into the failings of his poor, weak creatures.' This differs most widely, most fatally, from the experience of the apostle. He declares that he hates the infirmities into which he was occasionally led; that the law of his mind was for ever warring against the law in his members, and never willingly or tacitly suffering the law of sin to bring him into captivity, but waging a perpetual, an unceasing, and, in the end, a successful warfare against the great enemy of his soul. He demonstrates twice in the few verses we are considering,

that he was not at all alluding to wilful sins when he spoke thus; that he never for a moment tolerated himself in any, even the least sin, or looked with indifference upon its committal; that it was not he who did it, but sin that dwelt within him; that is, that his renewed nature was, on every occasion, most adverse, most abhorrent to the temptation, and that the remains of his natural corruption, and they alone, agreed to it; while he was so far from resting quietly under the sense even of this partial imperfection, that the language of his heart is, "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and never does he cease from the struggle, never retire from the conflict, until he is enabled, by divine grace, victoriously to exclaim, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Surely no more need be added, to convince the wilful sinner that he has

neither part nor lot in the apostle's experience, nor shall have in the apostle's triumph.

The whole subject addresses itself simply to you, who, while fighting the good fight, are, on account of your remaining infirmities, sometimes like God's people, the Israelites of old, "much discouraged because of the way." To you, by God's blessing, it will minister consolation, to know that if the foundation of your spiritual house be laid deep in the Rock of Ages, although its superstructure be not that perfect building which you could desire, and for which you daily pray, and after which you are daily and hourly striving, it still shall stand amid the wreck of elements; and shall be preserved when, seeing as man sees, and judging as man judges, and speaking as man speaks, many a fairer edifice, founded on the sand, shall be swept away for ever. Your confidence is this: "Faithful is

He who has promised, who also will do it." Under every feeling of sin committed, go again and again to the blood of sprinkling, praying for that repentance which is itself the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, and seeking that pardon which He never denies to the truly contrite and believing sinner; for be assured that, until the fountain opened upon Calvary shall cease to flow, no praying, confiding penitent shall be dismissed, uncleansed, from its healing streams; and while you there obtain pardon for what is past, you shall also receive strength fully commensurate with every conflict and every struggle that awaits you: only be careful to allow yourself in no sin: to strive with equal vigilance and prayerfulness against the smallest, as against the most flagrant transgression; and the time is not far distant when you shall be entirely "delivered from the body of this death;" and having washed your robes, and

made them white in the blood of the Lamb, shall unite with him, of whom we have been speaking, in saying, "Thanks be unto God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

LECTURE XII.

GALATIANS vi. 10.

GOD FORBID THAT I SHOULD GLORY, SAVE IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THIS is a remarkable sentiment, differing as widely and as entirely from any thing to be met with in the whole range of uninspired literature, as it does from the daily conviction and feeling of unregenerate man. It was delivered by one whose life and conversation we have lately considered; and from the peculiar manner in which it is ushered in, and the remarkable energy with which it is expressed, we cannot but feel that it must be well worthy of our most careful investigation.

Let us, then, seek for the promised aid of God's holy Spirit, while dwelling upon so striking a portion of the divine word, that we may each and all be led to participate in a feeling which this great apostle evidently considered as his highest privilege and his chiefest boast.

In furtherance of this object, let us consider,

First, What that was of which the inspired apostle was so well content to glory, and

Secondly, Why he would thus glory.

First, then, the object of St. Paul's glorying is thus described in the text, "the cross of Christ." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In addressing this congregation, I need not caution you, as the immortal Luther thought it necessary to caution his audience, when, in speaking from these very words, he said, "Moreover, the cross of Christ doth not signify

that piece of wood which Christ did bear upon His shoulders, and to the which He was afterwards nailed."* No, blessed be God, the time is past, we trust, at least among ourselves, when such cautions are necessary; the crucifix is no longer substituted for the cross, and in this Protestant country men no longer waste that adoration upon the mere senseless instrument, which belongs only to Him who hung upon it. By the cross of Christ, then, we understand, the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, that which the same apostle elsewhere says, was "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." It was this in which the apostle gloried, it was this for which, while the learned of the world despised it, and the noble of the

* See Luther on the Galatians, *in loco*.

world derided it, St. Paul gloried, as the one, the only truth worth knowing here below, the one, the only passport to an eternity of happiness.

Let us, then, consider a little more minutely the nature of this great truth, of which St. Paul spake so exultingly, which forms the theme of every good man's praises upon earth, which shall occupy his heart throughout unnumbered ages in the kingdom of his Father.

"The cross of Christ!" O, how do angels desire to look into that high mystery, and yet, with humility be it spoken, no created angel can see it with the eyes with which we see it, or feel it with the heart with which we appreciate it; for no created angel has ever been separated from God by sin, and brought back to His fatherly affection, forgiveness, and love, as we have been, by the cross of Christ. No created angel can say, as the spirits of just men made perfect are represented

in the apocalyptic vision to say, "We overcame by the blood of the Lamb." The cross of Christ is, therefore, peculiarly, of all created beings, our glory, and ours alone. When, as the prophet says, "All we like sheep had gone astray, and turned every one to his own way," the great and omnipotent God, even God the Father, found out this remedy, and sent His Son Jesus Christ, that on Him might be "laid the iniquity of us all." In pursuance with this resolution of the Most High, did God the Son, in the fulness of time, according to the terms of the everlasting covenant, come "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and take our nature; and having become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, thus purchase for Himself a peculiar people, who should believe in Him and obey Him upon earth, and be for the sake of His infinitely meritorious sacrifice, the partakers of His blessedness, and the sharers of

His joy, in the many mansions of His Father's house.

This, then, is the doctrine, the plain, and simple, and scriptural doctrine, in which the apostle gloried. And, brethren, this is the doctrine in which the holy men of every age, since the foundation of the world to the present time, although with different degrees of distinctness, have gloried, and in which the holy men of every denomination will continue to glory till time shall be no longer. What, for instance, was the source of Adam's hope? what the truth in which he gloried? Was it not in this, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head?" And what was this, however obscurely shadowed forth, but the cross of Christ? Again, In what did Abraham glory? and what was the truth which brought peace and salvation to his soul? Was it not this, "in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed?" It

was especially of this promise that we are told, "He believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;" and what was this but the cross of Christ? So might we trace the same blessed and glorious truth through every page of Revelation, and every period of the church's history, and find in all and in each, whether it be of the church militant here on earth, or of the church triumphant in heaven, but one subject of glory, one note of praise,—"Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Such a truth, so great, so high, so ennobling, so essential to man's best and eternal interests, so destructive to sin, to death, and to Satan, as it has from the beginning been the hope and the glory of God's people, so has it been the object of the bitterest and most ceaseless animosity of Satan, to God's

and man's eternal enemy. The cross of Christ is a doctrine well known to Satan, that evil spirit; he heard it from the lips of Deity itself in the garden of Eden; he heard the Saviour preach it in the streets and market-places of Jerusalem; he heard the martyrs proclaim it at the stake; he has seen the dying sinner rescued from his grasp by its words of power; he has beheld the weakest and the feeblest of the children of God depart, amidst pains which rack the body almost to distraction, and yet with the smile of peace upon their lips, and the assurance of peace within their bosoms. And he himself has felt its matchless power, even in his heart of hearts, when the Saviour of the world proclaimed it with his dying breath on Calvary, and saying, "It is finished," set his foot in triumph on that serpent's head, and took unto Himself the everlasting victory. And what is the consequence? That the

great effort of Satan has been in every age to strive with all the immensity of his power, and all the profundity of his cunning, to counteract this blessed and omnipotent truth; to set up something, which, while it shall bear as close a resemblance as possible to the cross of Christ, shall possess no one particle of its healing virtues, and its life-giving efficacy. Thus in the days of Papal superstition, he substituted the crucifix for the cross, and taught men to glory in self-inflicted penances, and bodily macerations, and the relics of saints, and the intercession of the Virgin Mother, to the neglect of the one great doctrine of salvation only by the blood of the incarnate Son. Those days were days of thick darkness, the intellects of men were neglected, education, except within the boundaries of the monasteries, was unknown, and therefore, gross as was the deceit, and bungling the counterfeit, and miserably unlike and misshapen the

substitute, the cheat was undiscovered in the gloom, and many a dying wretch, while he counted his beads, and clung with dying hand to the crucifix, believed that he was on the Rock of Ages, and that, like the apostle, he was glorying in the cross. But time rolled on, and the blessed day-star of the Reformation arose upon a benighted world; and while the heavy clouds were passing away from before the eyes of men, the Devil, with his accustomed cunning, saw the change which was going forward, and knew that if he would enter the lists with his Divine Conqueror, he must change the nature of his delusions, and produce some substitute for the cross of Christ, and the saving doctrine of the gospel, which the awakening intellect of the age should not so easily discover and repudiate.

Satan now assumed the garb of an angel of light, and produced in the place of the cross, the fair and beautiful

image of moral virtue.—Who could have imagined that virtue, the only perfect exemplar of which that ever appeared upon earth was in the person of the Lord Jesus, that Virtue herself should have been proposed by the great enemy of souls as the substitute for the doctrine of the cross! We are at first disposed to say, this is impossible; Satan would indeed here be divided against himself; as well might he cast out Devils, as propose virtue to mankind, for how then should his kingdom stand?—Brethren, there is nothing contradictory in this to those among you who know the deceitfulness of this fallen spirit;—did he not tempt Eve with knowledge? and is it strange that he should tempt our forefathers with virtue? No; as the dying Lambert exclaimed at the stake, "None but Christ, none but Christ!" so is the constant cry of Satan throughout all ages, Anything but Christ, anything but Christ.

This it was which made him substitute a code of moral virtue for the pure and blessed doctrine and graces of the cross. Thus, for years in succession, did he deaden the effects of the blessed Reformation among us, by substituting for "justification by the blood of Christ alone," its one great and saving truth, justification by human merits, justification by human works, by our own poor, miserable performances, which he called virtues; until the religion of this country, and more especially the Established Church of these realms, was so poisoned by this destructive heresy, that in too many cases the pulpit contradicted the desk; and when the Minister had read the truly scriptural and admirable liturgy of our Church, confessing that we are "miserable sinners," and that "in the Lord alone have we righteousness and strength," he ascended the pulpit to proclaim the dignity and perfectibility of human nature, the moral

fitness of things, and the beauty of virtue, and either omitted all reference to Him whose name he bore, or spake of Him only as an example, whose meekness, and charity, and love, might well bear a comparison with those of the Heathen Socrates, although perhaps not quite equal to them in uniformity and splendour.

But time has now again rolled on, and with the advancing spread of knowledge, and the increasing stretch of intellect, has come the time of refreshing from the presence of our God, and the outpouring of His good Spirit from on high. Again the cross of the Lord Jesus has been presented to the enlightened eyes and hearts of His people, in all its unadorned and native majesty; again the Ministers of God have learnt to glory with St. Paul in the cross, and in the cross alone; and again, wherever the gospel is proclaimed with fidelity, and plainness, and truth, there, blessed

be God, do crowded, and attentive, and heart-stricken audiences "set to their seal that God is true," and that the cross of Jesus is the truth of the living God.

And now again has Satan changed with the changing times; but so widely do the streams of the gospel flow, and so deeply do its waters stand, and so universally are they within the reach of those who thirst for the living stream, that many and various are the substitutes which he is compelled to adopt, if he would hope to keep pace with the kindling spirit of the times. In one place where the old leaven is still working, he presents this view of divine things: No doubt the cross of Christ is the saving truth of God; but then beware, that while exalting the cross you do not forget morality; teach men no longer that human merits are the cross, but teach them that they go hand in hand with the cross in satis-

fying God, and that it is only when they have done their best, that the cross and the merits of Christ come in, to make up the deficiency. In another place, where such an error would far too palpably proclaim its author, Satan has a widely differing, nay most opposite and contradictory delusion. To these he says, Yes, glory in the cross, it is all, it is every thing; man, poor wretched man, can indeed do nothing, his holiest works are sin, his holiest prayers are sin, what need then of them; Christ is all, He is your sanctification as well as your justification, both are alike imputed, cease from "the beggarly elements" to which men would bring you into bondage; the moral law is no rule of life to you, you need it not; the Sabbath has no obligations for you, you require it not; leave it to those who are yet in bondage. Child of God! every day is your Sabbath, the law of love written upon your heart is your

law; you need no other for your rule of life; rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free.

This is Satan's finished work, this is his crowning artifice, well fitted for the noon-day light, the meridian splendour which is now beaming from the cross of Christ; and this is the phantom in which many of God's professing people are now exulting! how different, how widely different from that cross of Christ in which the apostle gloried! He gloried in a doctrine which, while it acknowledged Christ and Christ alone as his wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, taught him to "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection;" taught him to delight in the law of God after the inner man, and to regulate every thought, and every word, and every action, by its pure, and holy, and self-denying precepts. He gloried in a doctrine which, while it proclaimed Christ as "all in

all," fully sufficient without our poor, miserable obedience, to satisfy the infinite justice of God, taught also that He is "the author of eternal salvation (only) unto all them that obey Him."

This is the doctrine in which St. Paul gloried, this is the doctrine in which we glory: give the plain and scriptural preacher of the cross of Christ a hovel in which to preach this doctrine, and place it by the side of the most gorgeous temple of the world, where any, or where all the substitutes of Satan, to which I have alluded, shall be presented amidst splendour of human pageantry, or the flights of human eloquence, or the brilliancy of human wit, and you shall see the hovel crowded with worshippers, and the temple desolate and deserted. Nay, more than this, you shall see the worshippers in the former become, by the power of God's grace, from careless, thoughtless, worldly, God-forgetting men, perhaps even from

drunkards, profligate, and profane, you shall see them become humble, holy, sober, chaste, self-denying, and obedient men of God; while, after all the efforts of human reason, and human eloquence, and human wit, you shall behold the worshippers of the latter unchanged, unedified, unblest. And why! Because this doctrine of the cross of Christ is "the power of God," as well as "the wisdom of God;" because His immutable word is pledged, and His invincible power is engaged, that it never shall return unto Him void, but that it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sends it; the advancement of His own honor, and the salvation of His people's souls.

Having thus considered what that doctrine was in which the apostle gloried, under the appellation of the cross of Christ, I proceed to state,

Secondly, Why he so gloried in it.

The reason was, doubtless, this, that St. Paul had found by blessed experi-

ence, that this doctrine was effectual to the salvation of every one that believeth, for it had been effectual to his own.

This was the reason that neither the scoffs of the Areopagites, nor the presence of crowned kings, nor the chains and fetters of a prison, nor the torturing agony of the scourge, could silence him upon this great subject; in this he gloried, and in this he was content to glory, though all the powers of earth and hell stood in array against him. O brethren, it is easy to learn religion like any other science; it is easy to teach religion like any other science; but to speak to the hearts of men, we must speak from the heart; to glory in a truth which the wise ones of the world despise, and the great ones of the world neglect, to be ready at all times and in all companies to make this our subject and our boast, and amidst the sneers and reprobation of a world at enmity with God, in despite of its laugh

of ridicule, and its terms of contempt, to take our stand calmly and fearlessly upon this leading truth of the revelation of God, and say this, and this alone, shall be my joy in life, my hope in death, my praise throughout eternity, can only be done by close, and intimate, and personal experience of its wonderful effects.

This, then, was the reason that St. Paul was enabled to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had been a despiser and a persecutor; the cross of Christ had made him a believer and a friend. He had been the "chief of sinners;" the cross of Christ had brought pardon even for *his* transgressions; and though they were red like crimson, had made them white as snow. He had denied the Lord who bought him; the cross of Christ had taught him to say and to feel, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to

Him against that day." With this truth engraven upon his heart, he was enabled to live in all holy obedience to the law of God, and yet to despise his own righteousness, and to desire, as a ground of merit, only to possess the "righteousness which is of God by faith;" he was enabled amidst the heaviest trials to call them "the light affliction which is but for a moment;" amidst a life of anxiety and sorrow to be "always rejoicing," to look forward to death without terror, and to judgment without alarm; to be able, as the most solemn conviction of his soul, to say, "I would rather depart and be with Christ, which is far better."—Are you, then, any longer surprised that he should say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

In conclusion, let me ask you, Do you know anything experimentally of this high subject? "Are you able to glory in the cross?" It is one thing not to

oppose these doctrines, it is another thing to approve of them when faithfully set before you; but it is a different, a widely different thing to receive them into your heart in the love of them, making them your joy and hope, your glory and your boast, and to exhibit their influence in your life, by all holy conversation and godliness.

To you, if such there be, to whom these great truths are matters of indifference, or perhaps even of ridicule; who attach some name of contempt and contumely to those who dare avow their adherence to truths in which every patriarch, and prophet, and apostle, and saint of God has gloried,—to you I would say, We will not argue upon this subject; like the Jewish youths of old, "We are not careful to answer you in this matter;" we are content to wait until the great and coming day determine whether this be indeed the truth of God, or the shibboleth of a party:

we are content to wait, until "the great white throne" descends, and the unnumbered myriads of the hosts of heaven gather round it, and the trumpet of the archangel sound, and his cry is heard, "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment." We are content to wait until the tombs be broken up, and the souls and bodies of men are re-united, and we stand together, the sheep and the goats, the lost and the saved, before the tribunal of Him, whose name we bear, whose gospel we love, in whose cross we glory. That awful hour will decide the question, "What is truth?" and will too late convince a ruined world, that the cross of Christ, the blood of Christ, the meritorious sacrifice of Christ, and salvation by that, and that alone, was the truth which received into their hearts, and its effects exhibited in their lives, would have transformed to them the day of judgment, into a day of

triumph, and an eternity of woe, into an eternity of glory.

And to you, my Christian brethren, to whom the blessed doctrine of which I have this day spoken is really and experimentally known; to you who have found by happy experience that it is to your souls "the power of God and the wisdom of God;" that it is able to guide you in health, to comfort you in sickness, to support you when you have believed yourselves even in the valley of the shadow of death,—to you I would say, strive far more than you ever yet have striven, labour far more than you ever yet have laboured, to testify, by lives of consistent holiness, your heartfelt gratitude, and to bring forth the daily fruits of a living faith.—The time is gone by, when men in the plenitude of their ignorance, contended that to preach the cross of Christ was to preach faith without works; but the time is

not gone by, the time never will go by, so long as Satan remains unchained, and sin unsubdued, when men will scrutinize with a most jealous eye, and narrate with a most bitter tongue, the infirmities and inconsistencies of those who possess a clearer view of these great truths than they themselves possess; the time never will go by, when the sins of God's people shall be the delight and exultation of the world. Remember, then, that you are doubly, nay trebly bound, to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" bound by the law of God, which is your rule of life, bound by the love of God, which is your principle of action, bound by the cross of Christ, which is your hope of glory, to roll away this reproach from God's people, and by your purity and rectitude, by your honesty and truth, by your candour and charity, by your holiness and self-denial, to demonstrate that you

are the followers of a perfect God, of a holy, harmless, undefiled Saviour.

Thus living, continue to "glory in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ," as the day-star of your souls, the hope of your salvation; the time is not far distant, when the poor imperfect praises with which you strive to glory in it here below, shall be exchanged for the perfect hosannas, the everlasting hallelujahs, with which you shall continue to glory in it throughout a boundless eternity.

THE END.

LEICESTER:
PRINTED BY J. S. CROSSLEY.

By the same Author.

PUBLISHED BY J. HATCHARD AND SON.

ELEVEN LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF ELISHA.
Third Edition. 12mo. 5s. 6d. bound in canvas.

SERMONS,
PREACHED IN TRINITY CHURCH, UPPER CHELSEA.
Fourth Edition. 6s. bound in canvas.

DISCOURSES
ON SOME OF THE
DOCTRINAL ARTICLES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.
Seventh Edition. 12mo. 5s. 6d. bound in canvas.

EIGHT LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF JACOB;
Fifteenth Edition. 12mo. 4s. 6d. bound in canvas.

NINE LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF ST. PETER;
Fifteenth Edition 4s. 6d. bound in canvas.

TWELVE LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM;
Ninth Edition. 5s. 6d. bound in canvas.

TWELVE LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF ST. PAUL;
PART I.
Ninth Edition. 5s. 6d. bound in canvas.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

ELEVEN LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST;
PART I.
Eighth Edition. 5s. 6d. bound in canvas.

ELEVEN LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST;
PART II.
Sixth Edition. 5s. 6d. bound in canvas.

CONCLUDING LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST;
PART III.
Sixth Edition. 5s. 6d. bound in canvas.

A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION
OF THE EPISTLES TO
THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.
Third Edition. 5s. 6d. bound in canvas.

TWO SERMONS ON THE SACRAMENT;
Seventh Edition. 1s. boards.

TWO SERMONS ON THE TRIAL OF THE SPIRIT;
Sixth Edition. 1s. 6d. boards.

A SERMON ON THE LORD'S DAY;
Fifth Edition. 6d.